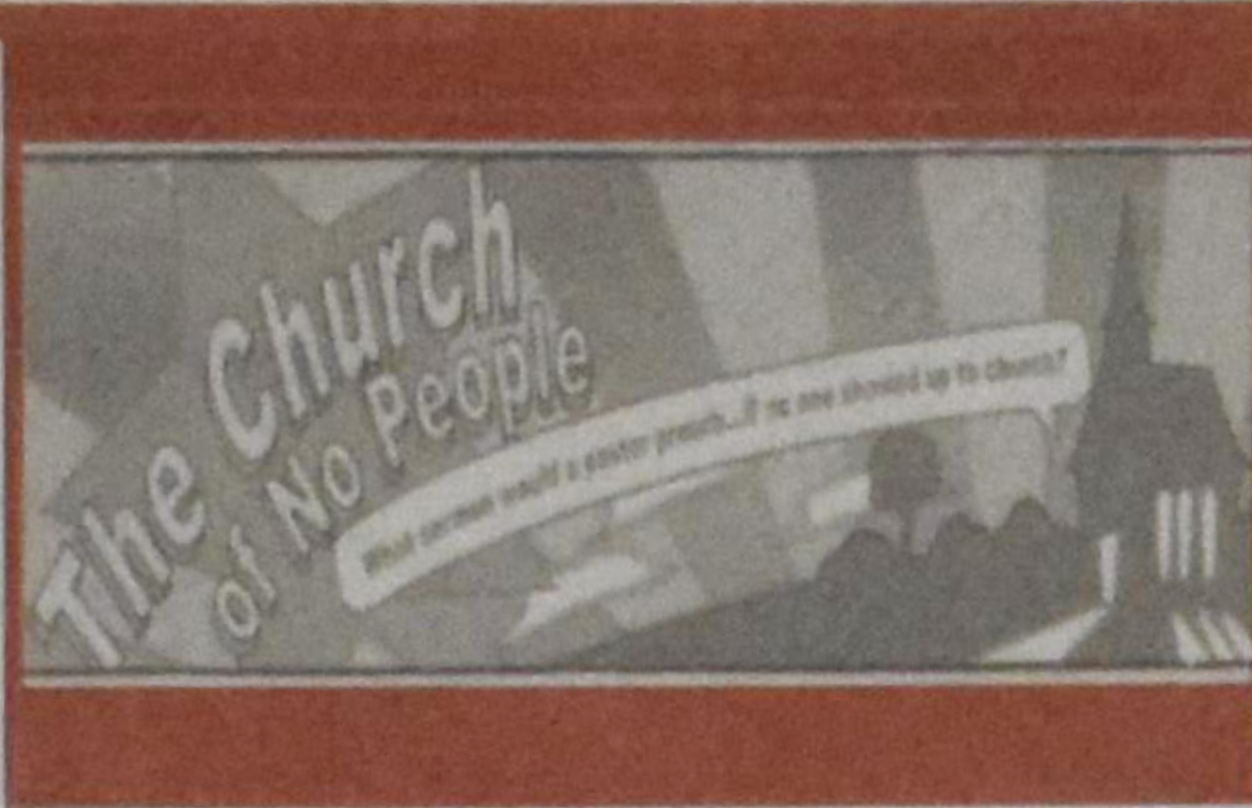




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OCT 13 2011

Media and memoriam

Christian Bell

On the first anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, I stood in the newsroom of the newspaper I had just become editor of and wondered: How can a newspaper memorialize such a cataclysmic event?

The answer to that question does not come any easier 10 years later. To greater or lesser ends, the extensive news coverage of the tenth anniversary of September 11th brought us back to that day.

Nearly every newspaper and news magazine in America ran a front-page headline and cover story about the attacks. (And so also did Canadian publications; this American tips his hat northward.) Television cable and network news produced hundreds of hours of special reports and documentaries about them. And, falling as it did on a Sunday, many sermons and Christian responses were offered as well.

What was notable about all the news stories, reflections and memorials was the similarity of their themes, regardless of who was speaking: "We remember."

*The urge to remember
isn't to stave off
forgiveness,
but rather to
rekindle empathy.*



Memory and patriotism were the dominant tropes in 10th anniversary media coverage of 9/11.

"Never forget." "Where were you?" "How we've changed." "The new normal." The pictures and imagery too had communal themes: Broken buildings. Fireballs. Smoke. Ash. American Flags.

The whole story

In both mainstream and Christian news sources, the most common visual image associated with September 11th anniversary stories were pictures of the World Trade Center towers in New York. Of the more than 600 newspaper front pages from the Newseum archives (newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/archive.asp), nearly every newspaper that included pictures from the 2001 attacks featured a picture of the towers.

The imagery of the towers, the violent explosions and the rubble is striking. And yet it doesn't tell the complete story. September 11th involved more than New York City;

189 people died at the Pentagon; another 44 died when United Flight 93 crashed in Pennsylvania. The omission is unfortunate, particularly in Christian news sources. When we depict a tragedy only in its most well recognized forms, we denigrate the value of the lives lost and the families shattered.

Among those families are the "children of 9/11," whose parents died in the attacks. The impact of September 11th on children was another common theme in the media coverage. The Christian response to that impact is progressive: Artist Makoto Fujimara, writing in *World Magazine*, said, "I wonder

if Osama bin Laden and his fellow terrorists ever anticipated that the children of 9/11 would become artists, musicians and creatives."

It was frequently noted that children who were young in 2001 have no real memory of the events. And yet, of all the themes, memory was by far the most common.

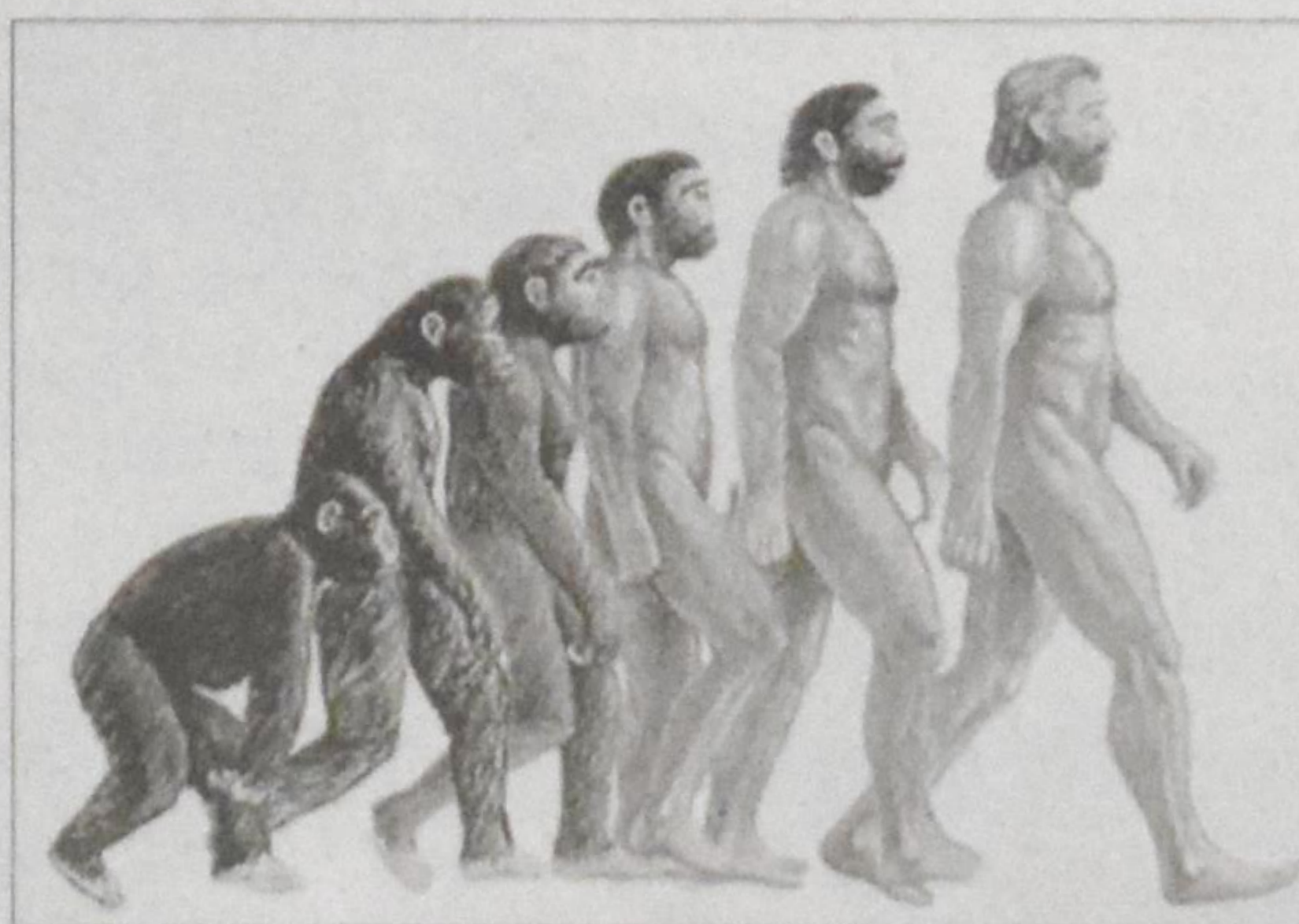
Remembering

A significant percentage of the headlines for front pages on September 11, 2011 contained some variation of the verb "remember." On one hand, the sentiment seems unnecessary to See **Memoriam** on page 2

Evolution: reading the book of nature

Gary Chiang

As normal after an invigorating game of squash, my opponent and I had a serious conversation on the state of the world and how to solve its problems. At this particular time, a storm was making waves in the Christian community. Two Calvin College religion professors questioned the existence of a real Adam and Eve in light of the overwhelming scientific evidence that God used evolution to create. I was assured by my opponent that Calvin College dealt with this "evolutionary tempest in a Fundamentalist teapot" quite well. The storm had subsided; the waters



We used to think the world was flat. While some scientific facts such as the round earth have been proven conclusively, evolution remains a theory.



were calmed. What transpired to reach this state of tranquillity? The scuttlebutt: one professor resigned, and the other agreed not to venture into this area again.

"Hmmm..." I thought.

I am a biology professor at Redeemer University College, which is similar in many respects to

Calvin College. Evolution is considered to be the foundation on which all of biology is based, and our current understanding of the theory of evolution certainly questions the existence of Adam and Eve. How do the fundamentalists view my teaching See **Evolution** on page 2

News

Memoriam *continued*

Never Forget

express – after all, who could forget? But the urge to remember isn't to stave off forgiveness, but rather to rekindle empathy.

As churchgoers, we're powerfully aware of this sense of memory. The theme of remembering comes up often in Scripture, particularly with regards to God's covenants with humanity. And often in that context, it is not only we who remember, but also God. God remembered the covenants he made with Noah and Abraham. Peter remembered Jesus' words upon hearing the rooster crow. The thief on the cross asks Jesus "remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Paul writes to the Ephesian and Philippean churches

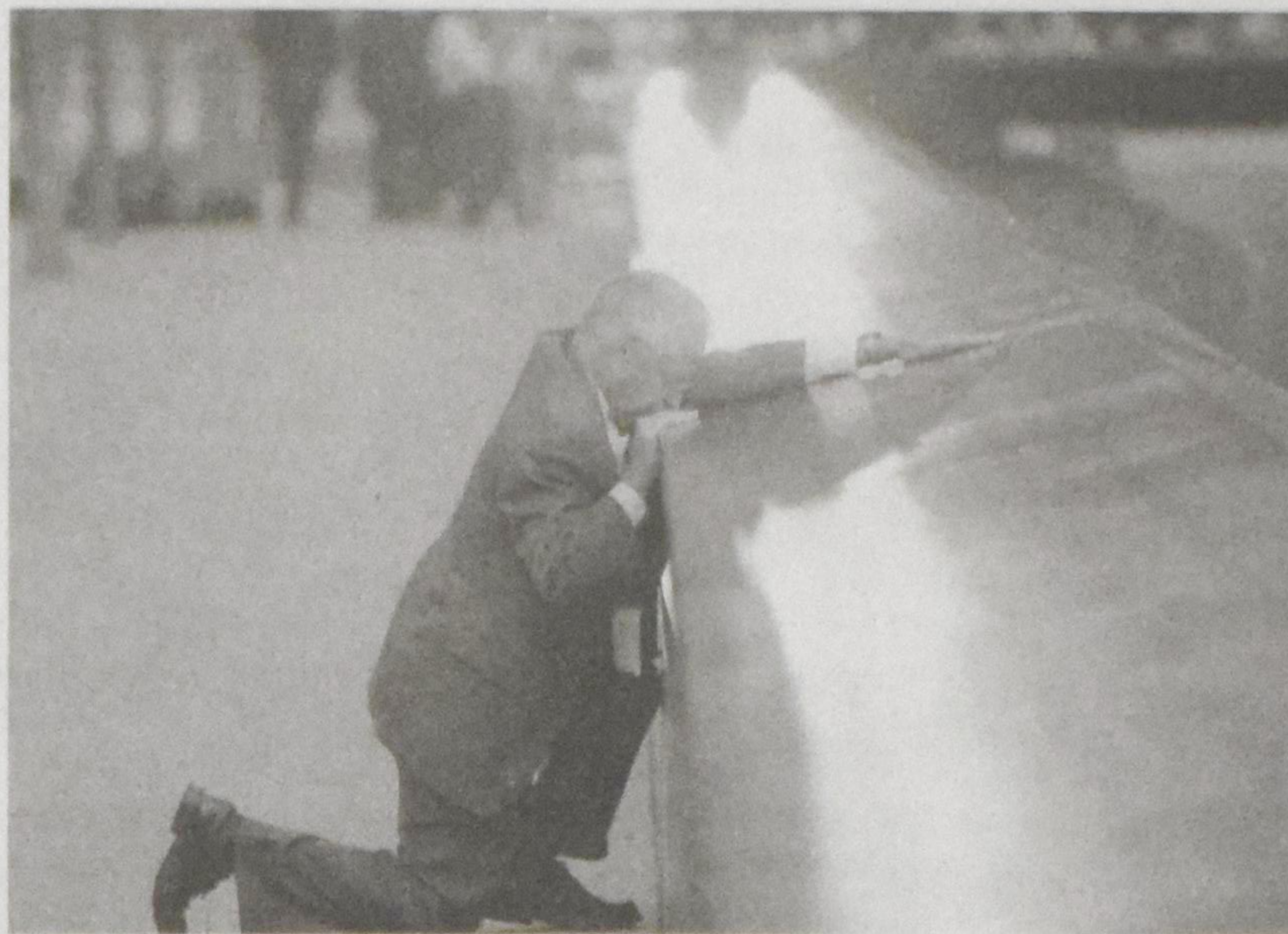
of remembering them in his prayers.

And so much of the Christian cultural coverage of the anniversary focused on memories, but with a focus on how they pointed forward, focusing not on the violence and loss but on a call for grace and peace in the midst of upheaval.

By comparison, calls to remember in mainstream media more often took the form of never forgetting, as if unending memory could ever be a safeguard against future violence. At least let us be thankful for this: Coverage of the September 11th anniversary in the American media was mostly devoid of politicking, as if to indicate that we've moved beyond fighting wars of blame, though sadly not yet beyond fighting the actual wars themselves.

Interfaith dialogue

One final element that deserves mention is a renewed call for interfaith dialogue, surprisingly coming from both mainstream and Christian media alike. The tension that persists between Muslims



A father mourns the loss of his son during the 10th anniversary commemoration.

and non-Muslims was mentioned in many stories. The *New York Times* referred to September 11th as "a terrorist attack that provoked widespread distrust and hostility toward Muslims," for example. And this was usually accompanied by a discussion of the ways in which life for Muslims in America has changed in the post-9/11 world, in terms of security, surveillance

and suspicion.

It has not, by many accounts, been a happy decade for Muslims. And yet churches are working to change that. The *New York Times* also ran a story about an interfaith effort that was begun in Syracuse, New York shortly after September

11th, and noted that similar efforts were underway "in countless other communities." The *Grand Rapids Press* ran an op/ed from its editor calling for a "year of interfaith understanding."

Dialogue with Muslims requires humility and a willingness to listen and learn, rather than lecture. It goes powerfully against the Evangelical primacy we are saturated with. And yet it may be among our most powerful testimonies, 10 years on, to affirm that our Muslim neighbors are created in the image of God, rather than denigrating them as practitioners of violence.

As we move away from the anniversary and September 11th, 2001 becomes an ever more distant memory, let us be mindful of the stories we've read, in order that we may never repeat it. After all, we remember. ✂

Christian Bell is a web designer for a non-profit organization and a graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary. He and his wife Beth live in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Evolution *continued*

and research? Am I allowed to freely teach evolution or I should stay below the radar and refrain from bringing science and faith together?

While striving to maintain peace among believers is commendable, keeping scripture and evolution separate drives the argument underground and causes it to fester even more. Creationists continue to make gains, and their arguments are bolstered by proponents of Intelligent Design. Christian

suggestion.

I have spoken to Creationists and Evolutionists alike and our discussions have tended to be very positive and enlightening, not combative or spiteful. My approach is not profound, nor complicated, yet it has been very effective. This approach is to clarify that the debate on the theory of evolution versus Genesis is NOT a scientific debate – it is a philosophical or theological debate. In the scientific enterprise, any supposed scientific

used to interpret scientific facts in terms of an ancient earth and natural selection.

Many newly discovered facts have failed to support evolution,

but unlike an

apparently

objective

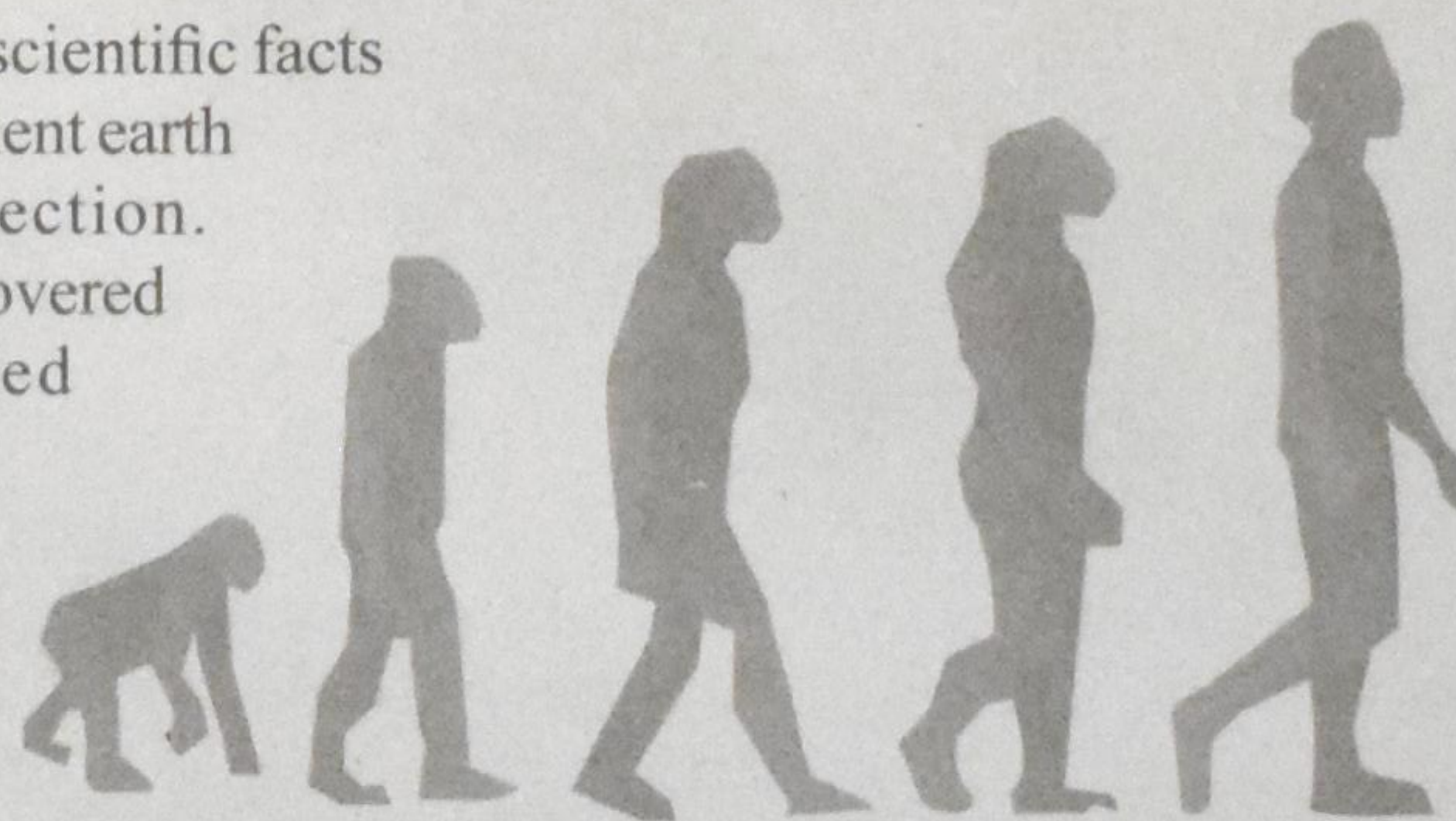
fact, like

the round

earth, the belief in

evolution remains steadfast. These findings have only necessitated a modification of the theory as with the development of punctuated equilibrium. And because evolution is fully supported by the public educational system and by several acclaimed Christian scientists, discoveries such as DNA or genetic drift or penicillin-resistant bacteria, are all interpreted as scientific proofs for evolution. Given its monopoly, it is quite understandable why the philosophy or worldview of evolution is considered a supposed scientific fact.

As I point out in my recent book, the very same facts about DNA can also be used to support the belief in a young earth and the creation of each "kind" of



biological life. When Christians rely on the interpretation of the facts by their favoured scientific theories to proclaim that either absolute truth, it actually divulges their misunderstanding of what a "fact" is and what science can really tell us.

So what does the church need to say about Adam and Eve, or DNA and evolution? I fully agree with John Suk that it is time we work out a "theology that is a better

reflection of both the book of scripture and the book of nature."

And to prepare for this venture, the church needs a more in-depth understanding of how this book of nature should really be read. DNA may say evolution,

as suggested by many, but it may also say creationism, as believed by many more. The

facts can be interpreted quite logically either way. As with

my own experience, this debate can be positive for the church and Calvin College if the distinction

between philosophy and science is better understood, and the book of nature is read with more discerning

eyes. My own book is an attempt to do just that and I conclude it with the plea: "Let us free

science from unsubstantiated preconceived beliefs and explore what is really true about the world

and the universe that we were born into!" ✂

Gary Chiang has been at Redeemer University College since 1990 and has taught at the University of Toronto, York University, McMaster University and Tyndale University College. His scientific research involves the reproductive physiology of insects. He has over 30 research papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals including one in the prestigious journal, *Science*.



The debate on the theory of evolution versus Genesis is not a scientific debate – it is a philosophical or theological debate.

evolutionists continue to tell of the need to consider how evolution impinges upon traditional Christian concepts. As John Suk warns us in his recent editorial ("The DNA says Evolution: What does the church?" CC August 8, 2011), Christians in the sciences may have to find churches that do not force them "to check their vocation at the door and enter into a pretend reality."

How can the church resolve this issue? Allow me to make a

fact, including gravity, has the potential to be disproved with new discoveries. The theory of evolution may be considered a supposed scientific fact, but it doesn't behave as one. Instead, it cannot be disproved with new facts because it is really a philosophy, a way of interpreting the scientific facts. It is not a fact in itself.

Since the time Darwin proposed the origin of species through natural selection in 1859, the evolutionary worldview has been

News

Canadians donate hope to the Horn of Africa

Emily Wierenga

EAST AFRICA – In spite of drought conditions worsening in the Horn of Africa over the past few months – with those in need of assistance increasing from 12.4 to 13.3 million – Christ's love has never been more evident.

"Time and time again we hear from people that the food they receive for their family's ration is going far beyond their immediate home," says Jacqueline Koster, Disaster Response Program Manager for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in East Africa. "These families have so little according to North American standards, but they give of what they have to help others. It is so great to be part of this demonstration of Christian love."

Nevertheless, the situation remains dire for both the old and young in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, with 750,000 at risk of death in the Bay region of Somalia "if relief operations are not scaled up," says Wayne deJong, Director of Disaster Response and Rehabilitation for CRWRC.



JACQUELINE KOSTER PHOTOS CRWRC EAST AFRICA



Christian organizations such as CRWRC are helping the hungry in East Africa.



The CRWRC, a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and ACT Alliance, is working alongside the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) to alleviate suffering and provide longer-term solutions.

"The aid is primarily focused on Kenya, where we have existing staff, partners and communities," says Kristen deRoo VanderBerg of the CRWRC.

The church's response includes supporting a CFGB project to give monthly rations of food aid from August until December for 20,000 families, in addition to providing access to drinking water, distributing feed and fodder for people's livestock, and offering a disaster risk-reduction specialist to help communities prepare for future droughts.

Spiritual comfort

"The food from the CRWRC coupled now with the water, fodder and mitigation is helping meet physical needs," says Esther Aregae, Assistant Chief of the village of Katilu in northern Kenya.

"Since it is coming from fellow Christians, it is also providing a spiritual comfort."

With the people of Katilu being pastoralists who raise cattle and goats, the drought has severely damaged their livelihood. In addition to not being able to feed their animals, relatives who had migrated north have returned to Katilu in hopes of finding better conditions.

"There is a certain level of animosity between the residents and the newcomers here," says Aregae. "We have two camps for internally displaced people in our region, and those living in the camps also compete for land and water... yet, we are all Turkana so we need to support each other."

The PWRDF has donated \$35,000 to the CFGB in order to fill stomachs in Laikipia, Turkana/West Pokit, Kilifi and Taita/Taveta. The project will provide 2,100 tonnes of maize, 420 tonnes of beans and split peas, 21 tonnes of salt and 136,000 litres of cooking oil to 8,400 households over a period of five months.

"Our priority at the moment is to reduce suffering and save lives," says Simon Chambers, Communications Coordinator for the PWRDF.

As of September 9, the Fund had collected \$452,666. In total, the CFGB has committed \$8.8 million to the drought and famine.

Displaced people

Work is also being done by the ACT Alliance in Somalia and Ethiopia, where the CRWRC and PWRDF are involved in providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to newly displaced people and refugees.

In Somalia, 2.85 million are in need of assistance, according to the USAID. ACT is distributing 3,710 tonnes of assorted food commodities over a period of five months; providing food for families living in 20 camps for internally displaced people, and food for 28,800 newly displaced persons; offering shelter kits and non-food items to vulnerable host communities and integrating community-based psychosocial support.

In Ethiopia, where 4.8 million people are in need of immediate assistance, an ACT Appeal program is providing food, health and nutrition classes, shelter materials, water and hygiene, literacy programs, skills training and secondary education for 99,846 people in the refugee camps.

With these programs approved, funded



and underway, and meteorologists forecasting rain in coming weeks, "Our focus is now turning to longer-term rehabilitation work beginning in early 2012," says deJong. "This will go a long way to helping these communities recover from the drought – and prepare them for the nearly inevitable next one."

Meanwhile, Chambers urges churches to continue to pray, act and give. "When it comes to responding to a situation like the famine in the Horn of Africa," he explains, "the most effective response is to give to an organization which is working through partners on the ground to provide the relief that is needed."

Emily Wierenga is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives with her husband and two boys in Neerlandia, Alta. Please visit emilywierenga.com for more information.



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Editorials

The problem with prisons



Phil Christman

I was raised to believe in the death penalty. *Lex talionis* – the “eye for an eye” principle – was sanctioned in Scripture, and my family, unlike most Reformed Christians, believed in biblical inerrancy. We believed, that is, that the Bible is not only the unique and indispensable record of God’s dealings with humanity, but that it is error-free on every topic it touches – from astronomy (Joshua 10:13) and troop counts (2 Chronicles 13:3) to the etiology of depression (1 Samuel 16:14) and the proper disposal of Babylonian babies (Psalm 137). This doctrine produces any number of surreal consequences, one of which is that a person can believe passionately in a God who empties himself and becomes subject to state-sponsored murder for love of us – and yet continue supporting the execution of any person found guilty of capital crimes.

Many of us were shaken when, during a September 7 debate between candidates for the U.S. Republican Presidential nomination, a crowd of Republicans broke into loud cheers when it was announced that Texas governor Rick Perry has presided over 234 executions. After all, even for many conservatives, the death penalty is a tragic, God-sanctioned necessity, not something to high-five your neighbour about. And anyone who bothers to study the matter knows that, given the way Texas justice operates, it would be a miracle if some of those 234 people were *not* innocent. (One of them, Cameron Todd Willingham, was found guilty on the basis of arson science that has since been comprehensively debunked. Perry’s response to this discovery was to dissolve the commission that made it).

But those Republican cheers for death are rooted in the same mistake that anchored my own teenage support for capital punishment: using false certainty as a shortcut for critical thought.

In my case, the certainty came from my belief in inerrancy (which Christian theologians from Origen to Barth have not shared). For those who cheer the death of strangers, false certainty is a psychological after-effect of mass incarceration – the phenomenon by which the US prison population has grown to four times its historic average, and which now threatens Canada, where federal spending on corrections has nearly doubled since 2006 even as crime continues a steady 20-year drop. In both countries, this growth in incarceration has been driven mostly by mandatory-minimum sentencing laws and the felonization of misdemeanours. Such policies make for good sound bites – “My administration is getting tough on drug dealers” – but their perverse side-effects are nearly endless. Consider the California man who, due to that state’s three-strikes law, was sentenced to 50 years to life in prison for stealing tapes from a video store. Or consider the young Texan who, due to anti-gang laws, received a seven-year sentence for graffiti.

Because of such factors the US prison population has grown to the point where it comprises one percent of the country’s overall population. And yet, because prisons are surrounded by such a vast silence – speech within prisons is strictly monitored, and communication with the outside world is subject to wardens’ whims – and because the effects of mass incarceration are concentrated on disfavoured populations (minorities and the working poor), the average US citizen knows next to nothing about prisons. Returned prisoners often don’t wish to discuss their experiences, which may have included anything from rape (anywhere) to being fed things the US Department of Agriculture does not consider safe for cattle (as happened in Texas) to watching a cellmate die from lack of health care (again, nearly anywhere). Thus the US citizen, when she thinks about prison at all, has two alternatives. She can admit that this vast system is subject to human fallibility – and go insane considering the possible consequences of unchecked error on such a scale. Or she can assume, as decades of television have conditioned her to assume, that the justice system is always right, and that people in prison don’t bear thinking about. It is clear which of these options is easiest. And it is equally clear how such a mental shortcut may lead, in time, to a crowd that cheers others’ deaths.

I am certain of a few things, though I keep their number strictly capped. One of them is that the God of the Bible risks the safety of the ninety-nine to save the one black sheep. That the growth of the “corrections industry,” and our refusal to attend to its consequences, makes a mockery of God’s restorative purposes is another.

Philip Christman holds an MFA in Fiction from the University of South Carolina and an MA in literature from Marquette University. He teaches writing at North Carolina Central University.



Despite the fact that a full one percent of the population is incarcerated, the average American knows very little about prisons.

The towers fall again



Michael Buma

*Centcom is drawing up plans.
They will drop snow on Congo.
It will melt without leaving a trace, at great expense.
America will pay any price to whiten darkness.
My fellow citizen cicadas rise to the tops of the
vanished Twin Towers
And float back down white as ashes
To introduce a new Ice Age.
The countless generations rise from underground this
afternoon
And fall like rain.
I never thought that I would live to see the towers fall
again.*

– Frederick Seidel, “The Bush Administration”

I was standing in the tube station at Piccadilly Circus in London, England when I first heard news of the 9/11 attacks. I had just flown in from Toronto and met up with a friend at Gatwick airport, and together we travelled into the city to meet another friend who would be joining us on a month-long backpacking trip around Britain and Ireland. The news came from a sympathetic-sounding man in a business suit, who asked us if we were Americans. We weren’t, but he told us anyway: what turned out to be the first plane had crashed into the twin towers in New York, and hundreds of people were dead.

My friends and I didn’t know what to do. The sightseeing we’d planned felt somehow inappropriate under the circumstances. Eventually we decided to make our way to the American Embassy, where a large pile of flags, bouquets, make-shift shrines and other mourning paraphernalia had already begun to accumulate. My journal from that day tells me I was moved to tears by the sight of a Yankees cap someone had thrown on the pile, and that I scribbled my own little note to leave for whoever might read: “and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well – In God We Trust.” The first part is Julian of Norwich’s theodicy as quoted by T.S. Eliot in *The Four Quartets*, and the second, of course, is the official motto of the United States.

Competing convictions

In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot reflects on a political moment of perhaps comparable gravity to 9/11, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s decision to accede the Sudetenland to Hitler in September 1938. For Eliot, this event cast doubt on the very “validity of our civilization. We could not match conviction with conviction, we had no ideas with which we could either meet or oppose the ideas opposed to us. Was our society, which had always been so assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premises, assembled round anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends?” It’s striking how easily these words could be applied to post-9/11 America.

I’m 32 years old, which means that I grew up after the end of history. According to Francis Fukuyama and others, the end of the Cold War and the triumph of liberal democracy signalled a final homogenizing stage in human socio-cultural development. Western ideas – of which America was the apotheosis – had proven most compelling, or so we were told, and in the increasingly global world all societies would one day organize and conduct themselves largely as we do. For people my age this seemed like a bit of a rip-off. Sure, our side had won, but many of us felt that we’d missed all the meaningful debate. Furthermore, many of us had reservations about what “our side” actually stood for. As Stanley Hauerwas put it in his pacifist response to 9/11, “what can freedom mean if the prime instance

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Michael Buma editor@christiancourier.ca
Features Editor: Cathy Smith cathy@christiancourier.ca
Church Page Editor: Marian Van Til marianvantil@roadrunner.com
Review Editor: Nick Schuurman reviews@christiancourier.ca
Contributing Editor: Bert Witvoet bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca
Contributing Editor: Angela Reitsma Bick angela@christian.ca
Admin/Bus. ads/Web: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca
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Canada

Letters

The promise comes by faith

I read Brian Walsh's reflections on Jack Layton (*CC*, September 12) with much interest and appreciation. Jack, was, indeed, a rare politician who showed a lot of courage, civility, generosity and care for the downtrodden. He was exemplary in many ways. I might not always agree with the political choices he made (his naïve belief that unions are usually right and all corporations are greedy, his pro-choice stance regarding abortion, his too great reliance on the state to bring about economic justice and compassion, his unwillingness to seek educational justice for alternative schools), but he was an honorable man who wanted the best for his country.

Walsh does well to remind us that Jack was not Jesus. He might have added that Jack was not a Christian either. Jack was spiritual in a general way, but not committed to the gospel of the cross and the resurrection. Would his good works be enough to get him into heaven, the way Rev. Hawkes and Brian Walsh suggest?

When we read Romans 4, we discover that someone as great as Abraham was not justified by works but by his faith and trust in God. This belief, and this belief only, was credited to him as righteousness. Nothing has changed in the relationship between God and sinners. Writes the Apostle Paul in verses 23-4: "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." I, too, recognize in the messages of the chalk-writing crowds at Nathan Philip Square a longing for a better world. The question is how does that longing get fulfillment? Only the God-man Jesus Christ is able to bridge the gap between a holy God and a fallen humanity and usher in a better world. To say anything else makes the Good News seem superfluous.

Bert Witvoet
St. Catharines, Ont.

The towers fall again *continued*

of the exercise of such freedom is to shop?"

Time for reflection

Then on Sept. 11, 2001, history abruptly restarted. Upon being confronted by enemies with such deeply held convictions, western liberal democracies might have taken time to re-examine our own. After a necessary period of mourning, 9/11 should have been an occasion for ideological humility and introspection. We should have tried to figure out in earnest depth and seriousness why anyone would go to such terrible lengths to do us harm. Please don't get me wrong: like King Lear, America was more sinned-against than sinning. But instead of rushing headlong back to the mall and into two intractable foreign wars, the United States should have stopped to consider that "trusting in God" at such a time might mean breaking its addiction to getting and spending and refusing to answer violence with violence. Rather than "giving thought to our ways," as Proverbs 14:8 prudently suggests, western societies responded to 9/11 by reasserting the unequivocal superiority of our way of life and elevating to the status of virtue our refusal to change anything about ourselves – lest the terrorists should win. Had we paused for legitimate self-examination, we might have realized we've put too much faith in the spirochete of money and things. And maybe, just maybe, we would have realized that our love of profit is rootless and inadequate when compared to the powerfully spiritual – if severely misguided – convictions held by the terrorists.

Of course this sort of soul-searching did go on in some sectors. As Christian Bell's analysis of the 9/11 10th anniversary memorial coverage in this issue of the *CC* suggests, many Christian voices have advocated "grace and peace" over violence. And only a few months after the dust from the twin towers had settled, Wendell Berry suggested that "the time will soon come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of September 11 without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended on that day." Ten years removed, these words seem remarkably prophetic. Almost seven years to the day after 9/11, America's fourth largest investment bank, Lehman Brothers, filed for bankruptcy protection and propelled the unfolding financial crisis of 2008 past the point of no return.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 another prominent public intellectual, Jean Baudrillard, infamously suggested that the twin towers were not attacked at all but had merely collapsed under the weight of their own nihilistic capitalism. As what used to be called "the free world" sinks further and further into debt, the gap between rich and poor widens into a gaping chasm, and many of us continue living recklessly beyond our means, Baudrillard's claim sounds less and less absurd with each passing day. Perhaps when our society's faith in eternal increase and unending profit is finally shaken, we will learn what it truly means to put our trust in God and recognize that only by his grace shall all manner of things be well.

Michael Buma teaches at the University of Western Ontario,
and is the interim editor of the *Christian Courier*.

CHRISTIAN COURIER

CC launches new site

Christian Courier is pleased to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website. Check out christiancourier.ca for news, features, columnist blogs and to subscribe or renew with ease. Current subscribers can also access our archives to dig up that article you've been meaning to share with a friend. You will find space to comment on new articles, check out current job postings and join the online *CC* community through Facebook. It's worth checking out!

Hagiographic mixup

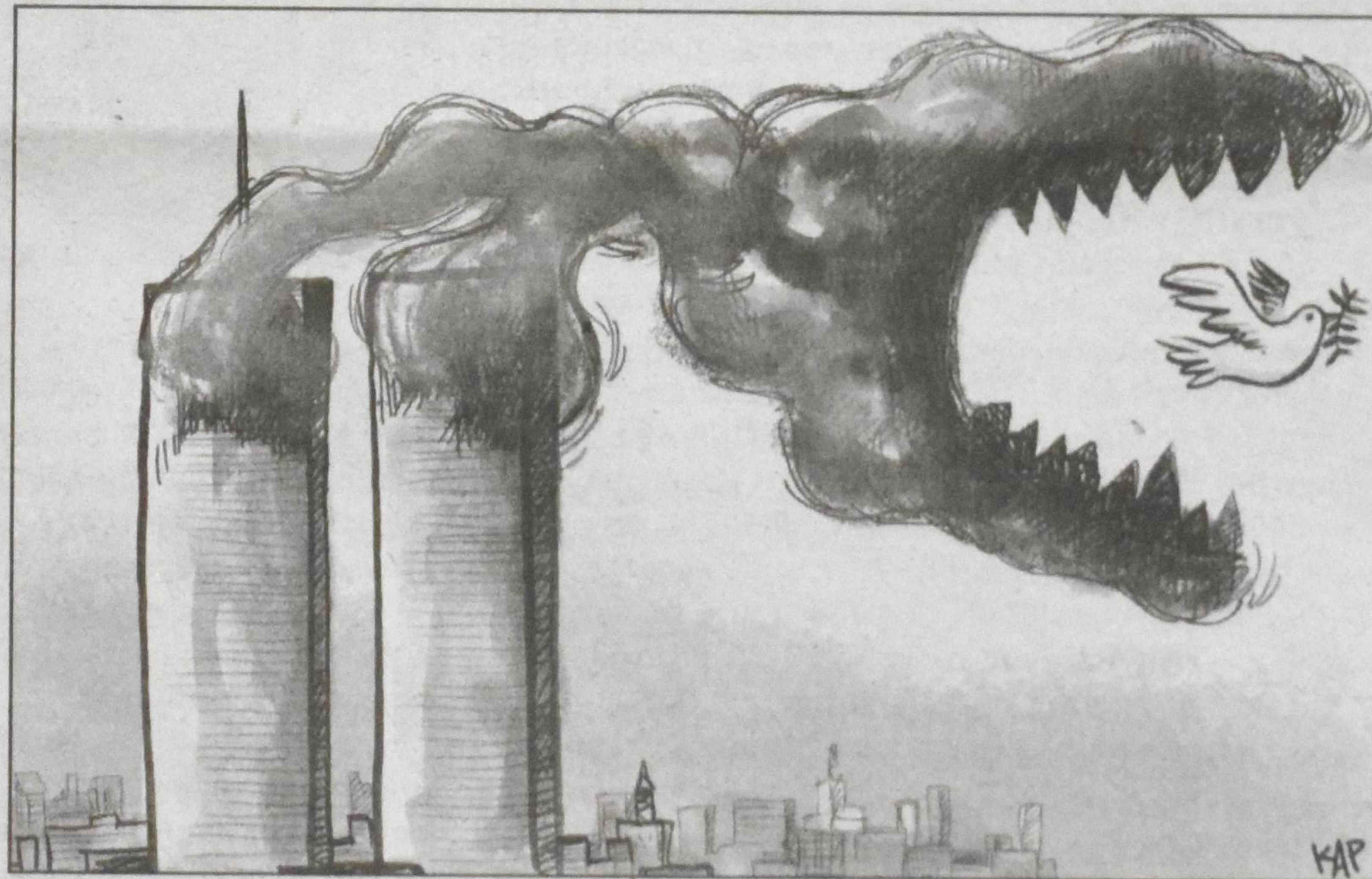
I read Harry Antonides's column on page 15 and then Brian Walsh's thoughts on page 16 of the Sept. 12 issue. I think the illustrations were mixed up. The halo should be removed from Obama's picture and placed on Layton's. That way both writers would be happier.

Curt Gesch
Telkwa, B.C.

"Rebuke the discerning, and they will gain knowledge."

– Proverbs 19:25

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News

Mennonites ask themselves: What are we singing?

WATERLOO, Ont. (MCC/MM) – Congregations throughout the Mennonite Church Canada and the Mennonite Church USA are being asked this fall, winter and spring to keep track of all the songs they sing. As they do, it will help determine what the next collection of music for the church will look like.

What emerges might look like the current *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Or it might be PowerPoint files or another emerging format, or all of the above, say the project's planners. Therefore, the result is not being called a hymnal but a "song collection."

The planners are asking questions like, "What kind of worship resources are needed for Mennonite congregations in the future?" and "How is music used in worship?"

The planners are the Bi-National Worship Council, which was formed in 2009. The council is chaired by Dave Bergen of Mennonite Church Canada, Marlene Kropf of the Mennonite Church USA and Amy Gingerich of MennoMedia. MennoMedia was formed from a merger in July between Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media. It has offices in both Waterloo and Harrisonburg, Virginia.

A four-session study guide called *The Heart of Mennonite Worship: Five Vital Rhythms* is being recommended to congregations for use between now and April 2012. Congregations in both Canada and the U.S. have also been urged to participate in an online survey that will let the planners know what they sing each week during an eight-month period. The survey is at MennoMedia.org/worship.

Diversity affects 'heart songs'

In July, delegates at the Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA national gatherings had a chance to respond to presentations on the song-collection project. They also listed their congregations' "heart songs" – songs that have become beloved by their churches. One delegate noted that his congregation is so diverse that what is a "heart song" for 60 percent is not for the other 40 percent.

Canadian delegates divided into groups for a discussion on worship and music. They reflected considerable diversity in worship styles and musical tastes. Some noted that diversity leads to hard feelings in churches, but in other churches diversity brings richness to the worship experience.

Said one Canadian delegate, "Music brings the congregation together when people are willing to accept each other's preferences." One U.S. table group reported agreement on the importance of songs that focus on community rather than on the individual.

Amy Gingerich, co-chair of the Bi-National Worship Council and MennoMedia's director of print media, said "Singing has become almost a sacrament for Mennonites. Our past hymnals have become books or prayer, and our song collections an entrance into how we experience God. As we contemplate how to meet the changing music needs of our churches, we want to hear from everyone so that our new song collection is something that brings us together as a body of believers united in worship."

The current hymnal used by Mennonites and Church of the Brethren (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*) will be 20 years old in 2012. Two Mennonite supplements were added over the years: *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*.

Gingerich concluded, "A song collection is years in the making, and hearing from congregations is the right place to start as we seek to learn what songs have been embraced by our faith communities." ✂

Canadian CRC man helps realize 9/11 water memorial

NEW YORK (CRCNA) – Dan Euser, a landscape architect who is a member of a Christian Reformed Church, says he experienced God's hand and grace at work throughout the lengthy process of realizing the architect's design for the massive fountains that now occupy the footprint of the former Twin Towers at the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York City.



Located on the 16-acre site where the twin towers of the World Trade Center once stood, the memorial takes up about half of the area. Euser and his firm, Waterarchitecture Inc., executed the design of the large fountains, from which water pours into two deep, square pools, where the towers once stood, before the water disappears into an opening.

"I wanted to make the water visible but not overpowering," said Euser, who belongs to Community CRC of Richmond Hills in Toronto. "I see the water as a symbol of washing away and of healing and yet also reflecting a vale of tears – the grief that the families of those who died in the towers still feel."

The waterfalls and reflecting pools also represent a sense of renewal and closure: the water flows down, disappears and then reappears to begin flowing again.

"I feel humbled. It has been an honour to be part of that renewal," said Euser. "The memorial has become sacred ground. It is a place of healing for the families and for others from all over the world that remember that day and will visit the site."

Euser was visiting his father in Holland on the day of the attacks. At first, he was worried that his brother, who worked in New York City and regularly walked through the World Trade Center, may have been caught in the devastation. But he was not there when the planes hit the towers.

At that time, Euser had no idea that he would play a role in helping to create a memorial whose focus is to help heal the many wounds that were opened that day.

Self-effacing expert

Lynnette Postuma, also a landscape architect in Toronto and a member of the CRC, says Dan Euser was a good choice for the project. He is an easy-going man who keeps a low profile, rarely talking about his status as a pre-eminent expert in the area of water-feature design. But he has been involved in projects all over the world.

"He is creative and very competent. In the world of architecture and landscape architecture everyone knows who he is," Postuma said.

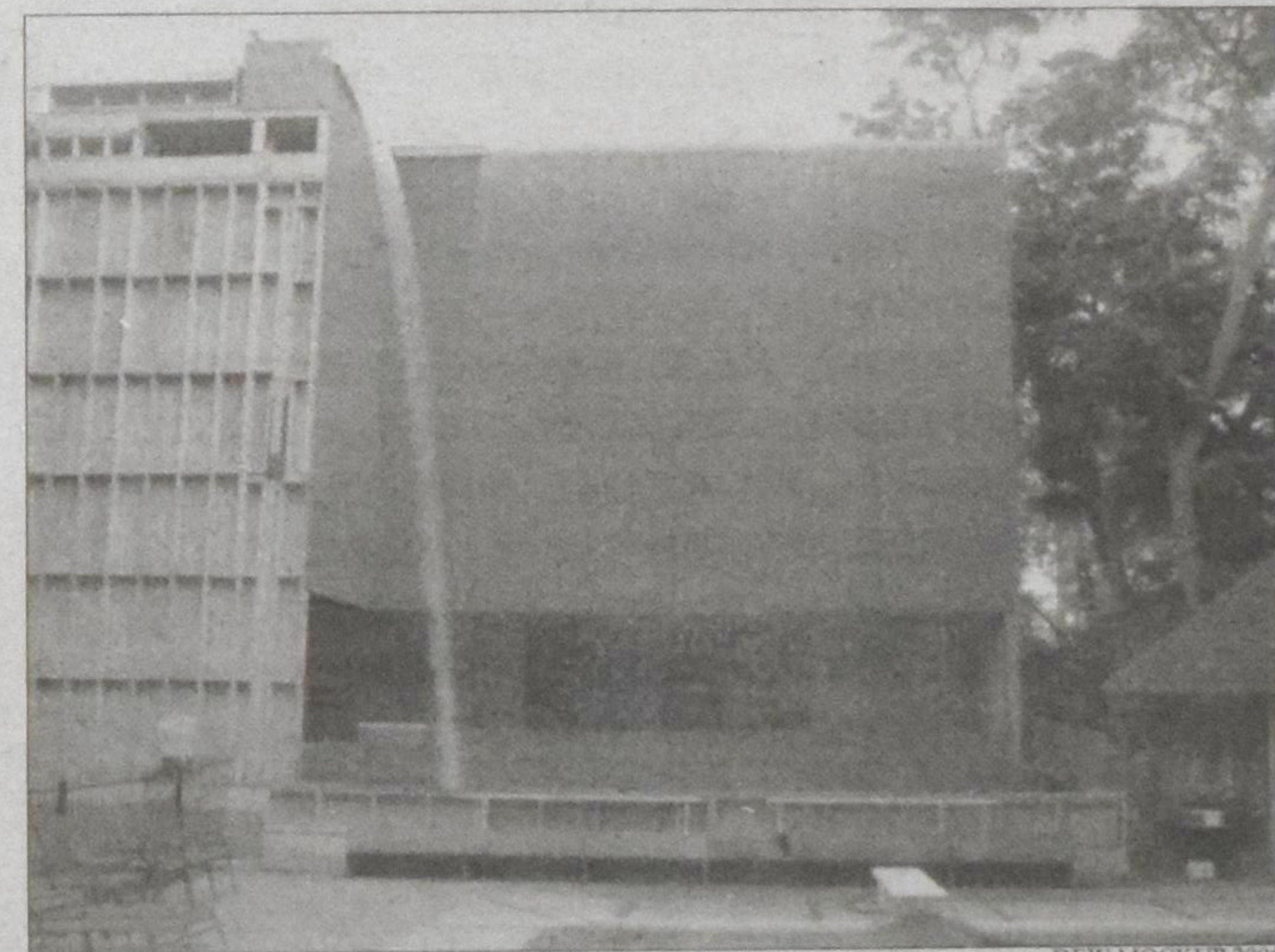
The memorial and museum were dedicated in a ceremony held on September 11, 2011, which was 10 years to the day when airplanes, driven by terrorists, crashed into the towers. Also on that day, a terrorist-operated plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and another plane was taken over by passengers and crash-landed in a farm field in Pennsylvania.

The museum on the site is still being built on what is called The Memorial Plaza. More than 400 trees are planned for the plaza, surrounding the Memorial's massive reflecting pools.

In preparation for building the pools on the site of Ground Zero, Euser constructed a mock-up in the yard behind his home and workshop north of Toronto. The temporary structure was made of plywood sheets, timber framing, steel-plate bracing and pumps. He used the mock-up to search for the ideal angle, distribution, speed and volume of water flow. When he viewed the memorial in the days before the ceremony, he was pleased by what he saw.

"The water is animated by the weather. Crystal streams fall down in the sunlight. Gusts of wind lift the water out. It is just alive," he says.

Euser's Christian faith and the biblical themes of cleansing, healing and renewal, he said, have helped in inspiring the work that he has done, especially in the Ground Zero project. "I see God's hand in all of this. It's been providential." ✂



Euser built the mock-up for the 9/11 memorial in his backyard.



News

U.S. Supreme Court takes up church employment disputes and 'ministerial exception'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PCT)—The U.S. Supreme Court is currently hearing oral arguments in a case that could help determine how much latitude American religious organizations have in making employment decisions about clergy and others who perform “religious” duties.

The case centres on a legal doctrine known as the “ministerial exception.” The Supreme Court has never expressly ruled on the doctrine, but judges in lower federal courts have used it to exempt religious organizations from anti-discrimination laws and other statutes that regulate how employers treat their workers.

In *Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC* (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), the Supreme Court will decide whether a teacher who devoted part of her day to “religious duties” should be considered a ministerial employee in a wrongful dismissal suit. More importantly, *Hosanna-Tabor* offers the court an opportunity to shrink or expand the reach of the ministerial exception, thereby putting its stamp on an important doctrine that has been applied in different ways by lower federal and state courts.



'Called' vs. 'lay' teachers

The Hosanna-Tabor elementary school in Redford, Michigan, was operated by a congregation affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). (The school closed in 2009.) Like other LCMS schools, Hosanna-Tabor employed two types of teachers: lay teachers, hired by school administrators to serve one-year renewable contracts; and “called” teachers, approved by the congregation and hired on an open-ended basis.

The notion of teachers being “called” is uniquely interpreted in the LCMS. “Called” teachers must meet specific requirements, including the completion of significant theological and other coursework. A called teacher is a “commissioned minister,” a position without preaching or sacramental duties but with other ministerial functions.

Teacher Cheryl Perich received her call in 2000. Perich taught her fourth-grade students a range of subjects, including math, social studies, music, and Bible/religion four days a week. She regularly led her students in prayer and in a daily devotional, and planned and led worship services.

In June 2004, Perich was hospitalized and diagnosed with narcolepsy, a chronic sleep disorder. She was initially given full pay and benefits and told that she would have a job when she returned. Six months later (December) her doctors said she was not yet well enough to work. The school hired a replacement for Perich for the rest of the school year. But on Jan. 30,

2005, the school asked Perich to voluntarily resign her call. She refused, reiterating that, by then, she was ready to report back to work.

Perich told school officials that if the dispute could not be resolved she would take legal action under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which prohibits all but the smallest employers from discriminating against people with disabilities. The act also prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who attempt to assert their rights under the act.

On April 10, 2005, the Hosanna-Tabor congregation voted to rescind Perich's call, citing continuing concerns about her health and ability to function as a teacher. The church also “wanted to be fair” to the teacher who had been hired to replace her. The congregation was also troubled by Perich's threat to sue. (Perich would later say that she was never informed about the church's internal dispute-resolution process.)

'Sacred' vs. 'Secular'?

On May 15, 2005, Perich filed a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC and Perich then filed suit in federal district court alleging that the church had retaliated against Perich (in violation of the ADA) by rescinding her call after it learned that she had a disability and was contemplating legal action.

On Oct. 23, 2008, the district court decided against Perich, ruling that since she had been called as a commissioned minister, her firing was subject to the ministerial exception and thus was not within the court's purview. On March 2, 2010, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned that decision. It ruled that Perich was not covered by the ministerial exception because most of her duties (teaching “non-religious” subjects) were “secular.” The church then appealed to the Supreme Court, which on March 28, 2011, agreed to hear the case.

Hosanna-Tabor centres its arguments on a long-standing U.S. constitutional principle that courts should not rule on religious questions or interpret church doctrine. The EEOC and Perich centre their arguments on the principle that, with rare exceptions, religious organizations are subject to the same laws and legal requirements as everyone else. While the Free Exercise Clause of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment guarantees religious liberty, the Supreme Court has ruled in the past that the clause does not grant churches the right to ignore valid laws, even when those laws impede religious practice.

Could be precedent-setting

A Supreme Court decision that broadly favours the government and Perich would likely shrink the ministerial exception, limiting it to narrow circumstances that involve “religious questions.” A narrower government/Perich victory might focus on the issue of retaliation against employees who report or threaten to report allegedly unlawful behavior.

Because the American high court has never before ruled on the ministerial exception, the Hosanna-Tabor case offers the justices an opportunity to mold and shape a doctrine that has existed in lower federal courts for 40 years. The lack of even one prior Supreme Court decision on the doctrine makes it difficult to predict how the court ultimately will rule, legal observers say, but the Hosanna-Tabor case has the potential to change the ministerial exception, perhaps quite significantly. ➤

U.S.: Largest Protestant church considers a name change



Marian Van Til, with files from CT

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is not actually a convention but a church. And that church, America's oldest and largest Protestant denomination (founded 1845), is considering whether a name change would help its ministry in the modern world.

Last month SBC president Bryant Wright announced that a task force made up of pastors and members across the U.S. would study the issue. The decision to reconsider the current name came “after hearing numerous reports about the difficulties associated with having a regional name,” reported *Christianity Today*.

Wright was quoted as saying, “Starting a church in New York, or Boston, or Minneapolis or Cheyenne, Wyoming — it's really a barrier to a lot of folks in even considering that church or that ministry. When they hear ‘Southern Baptist,’ it's a regional perception there.”

The task force will look at names that are “not so geographically limiting,” said Wright. It is also hoped that a broader name would help the church be better prepared for “reaching North America for Christ in the 21st century.”

A name change was previously considered as long ago as the mid-1970s. Then five years ago a poll by the Center for Missional Research found that though a majority of adults had a positive view of people who are Southern Baptists, 25 percent said they would be deterred from joining or even visiting a church called “South Baptist Convention.” For 18 to 24 year olds that number rose to 40 percent.

A name-change proposal would have to be passed by two consecutive church conventions, so a change could not happen officially until 2013.

The SBC has 16,228,438 members in nearly 44,000 congregations, according to the National Council of Churches' 2010 Yearbook. That's down very slightly (0.24 percent) from the previous year. ➤

3,000 Christians in prison in Eritrea

ASMARA, Eritrea (CCO) — The government of Eritrea — one of the most repressive in the world — has placed 3,000 Christians in prison, “where they face mistreatment and deprivation of food and medical treatment, pending renunciation of their faith,” according to Christian Solidarity Worldwide. The organization is part of a coalition that is calling upon the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate human rights violations in the African nation.



Colonized by Italy, Eritrea was awarded to Ethiopia in 1952 and eventually annexed, leading to a decades-long civil war. Eritrea regained its independence in 1993 under the leadership of Isaias Afwerki, a Marxist who received his military training in Mao Zedong's China. Afwerki remains the totalitarian nation's leader today. Reporters Without Borders deems Eritrea's treatment of press freedom the worst in the world.

Originally a Christian area that ceased communion with the Roman church following the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, the nation of 5.8 million is now half Muslim, 30 percent Eritrean Orthodox and three percent Eastern Catholic.

The government recognizes the existence only of Islam, the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Lutheran church. According to the U.S. State Department, it systematically arrests and imprisons other believers. In some cases the government reportedly makes prisoners' conversion to Eritrean Orthodoxy, obtained under torture, a condition for release.

Official recognition does not provide immunity from persecution. In 2005, the government appointed a layperson to administer the Eritrean Orthodox Church, and the following year, the Church's patriarch was deposed. In 1998, the government took over Catholic schools and health clinics; in 2008, it took over all church property in the nation's capital. ➤

Columns

Principalities
& Powers

David Koyzis



Authority and the 'rights' of the child



In 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was subsequently signed by representatives of 140 countries and ratified or accepted by 193, with the notable exceptions of Somalia and the United States.

This was not the first time that obligations towards children had been expressed in terms of rights. An earlier Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child had been adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, although in its five brief points it never once used the word *rights*, speaking instead the language of duty: the child "must be fed," "must be sheltered and succored," "must be protected against every form of exploitation," etc.

The 1959 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child is similarly spare in using the language of rights, mentioning them twice under Principle 1 and not at all in Principles 2 through 10. By contrast, the 1989 Convention consists of 54 articles in which rights are referred to 26 times and the obligations of "States Parties" mentioned 110 times.

These differences between the 1989 Convention and the two earlier documents are significant in that they represent an historic shift which Michael Ignatieff has described as the "Rights Revolution," Francis Fukuyama as the "Great Disruption," and what I have called the dawn of the "choice-enhancement state." It is worth noting that, especially in the US, the Convention is controversial because it would seem to bring the state too far into the legitimate sphere of family intimacy. Such reservations have thus far

successfully prevented the US from ratifying it. Even among the signatories, several states, including the Vatican, have explicitly qualified their acceptance for various reasons. Indeed it is not altogether clear that recasting parental or societal obligations towards children as rights represents genuine progress in ensuring the latter's well-being, especially given the current tendency to view all rights as enforceable by the courts.

In one sense, of course, no one can doubt that children have the right to be loved and cared for by their parents. Yet the primary agents for fulfilling this responsibility are the parents themselves, and not the "states parties" which have signed the document, though the latter certainly have an obligation towards both parents and their children under their general mandate to do public justice. It is worth noting that the word *authority* appears only three times in the text of the Convention and each time refers to legal or judicial authority. When used in the plural form, *authorities* always denotes political authorities. Noticeably absent from all three documents is a recognition of the primacy of *parental* authority in nurturing the child towards maturity.

Complex relationships

What will a shift to the language of authority gain for us? I am increasingly persuaded that it will enable us better to account for the full complexity of the relationship between parents and minor children – necessarily an ever-changing relationship as the children grow to maturity.

At the birth of a child, the parents' authority over her is



One of the aims of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child is to stop child labour and trafficking.

virtually total. Among living creatures, the human child is uniquely helpless, unable to walk, talk, feed herself and so forth. Her parents must care for her in an especially intensive way. Created in God's image from conception, her own active authority as image-bearer is largely latent at this point, her well-being closely bound up especially with her mother, but also with her father.

However, as she grows and assumes new capacities, her parents' authority over her slowly recedes until she attains full maturity and the limited authority over the course of her own life that accompanies it. Even before she reaches this point, direct parental authority over her recedes before other authorities, including those of child-care workers, teachers, pastors, and other so-called agents of socialization. This begins when the child starts school around age five, if not earlier. Yet parental authority properly remains primary throughout.

When children finally reach adulthood, they come to recognize and realize their own authority as divine image-bearers – an authority that is never free from other authorities but is ultimately subject to God's sovereignty.

David T. Koyzis (dkoyzis@redeemer.ca) is on a sabbatical leave from Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and has nearly completed a book on authority, office and the image of God.

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

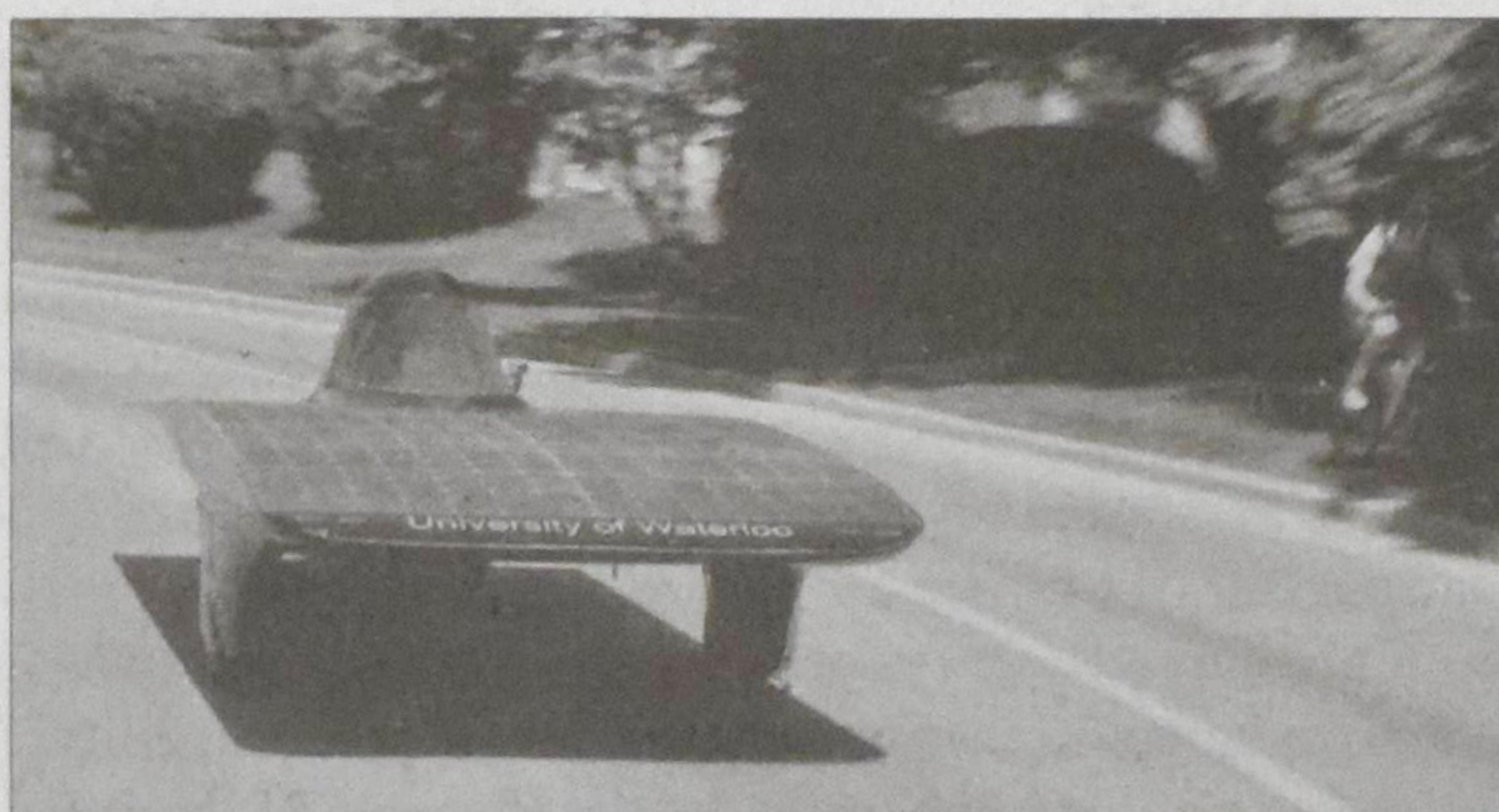


This fall, Redeemer University College is bringing online a 131 kiloWatt photo-voltaic (PV) solar power project. The roof just above my office, like much of Redeemer's roof-line now, is covered with a neat array of photovoltaic panels. I like the thought that the power I'm consuming in my office is offset by the power produced just above it.

According to Statistics Canada, the average Canadian household consumed 40 GigaJoules of energy last year. Assuming an average estimate of five hours of sunlight throughout the year, Redeemer's panels should generate roughly 850 GigaJoules of energy each year, enough energy to power approximately 21 average Canadian homes. This project is a good example of how we can integrate our beliefs and behaviour as an institution. Redeemer's curriculum is built on Biblical themes such as the cultural mandate, and clean, green power is one practical way to live out our theology.

Solar power received a boost in Ontario with the introduction of North America's first comprehensive guaranteed pricing structure for renewable energy production. The FIT (Feed-In-Tariff) program, modelled after the ones used in Japan and Germany, was established in Ontario for homes and businesses and offers stable prices for selling clean power back to the grid under a long-term 20-year contract. The FIT Program was enabled by the "Green Energy and Green Economy Act" in 2009. The purpose of the program was to help Ontario phase out coal-fired electricity generation and to boost economic activity and development in the area of renewable energy technologies. According to the Ontario Power Authority FIT website (fit.powerauthority.on.ca), as of September 2011 there have been almost 39,000 applications to the

Solar power: a step in the right direction



The University of Waterloo's "Midnight Sun" solar powered car.

program by homeowners, and over 23,000 contracts offered. According the website, over 99 percent of the applications are for solar PV projects.

Conversion to solar power using photo-voltaic panels has not been limited to homes and businesses; there has also been work towards utility-scale solar power. In California, work has begun on the largest solar power plant in the world. The Blythe Solar Power Project, in Riverside County, California, will generate 1,000 megawatts of solar power. Additional utility-scale power plants are currently being planned.

Solar power is also well-suited to developing countries where electrical infra-structure is limited, or in rural areas where traditional power lines are non-existent. Solar power is a promising solution to the problem of providing sustainable, clean power for lighting in developing countries (although the energy needs to be stored in a battery for use at night).

Solar power continues to be an active area of research in universities and industry. Many universities with engineering programs have developed solar cars to demonstrate the possibilities of renewable energy. One such car, the "Midnight Sun," is a student project at the

University of Waterloo and is a one-person vehicle shaped like a spaceship on wheels, with its topside completely covered in high-efficiency solar cells (uwmidsun.com). Vehicles such as these participate in competitions such as the World Solar Challenge, a solar-powered race covering over 3,000 km through the Australian Outback.

Despite the many promising aspects of solar power, it is not without its problems. For starters, performing a cradle-to-grave life-cycle analysis on solar cells reveals that the production of solar cells requires energy, generates emissions and has a definite environmental impact. Furthermore, solar power is capable of playing only one part in a sustainable electricity infrastructure. For starters, solar power is only available during daylight hours and capable of only providing a portion of electricity demands. In addition, solar power production is reduced on cloudy days or when the panels are covered by snow. Using current technology, the overall power conversion efficiency of a typical solar panel is only about 15 percent, and this efficiency is further reduced by increases in temperature. In utility-scale solar-power projects such as the Blythe project in California, there are additional concerns over the impact to local animal life and concerns over conserving water which is used for cooling.

When it comes to a perfect power source, there is no "silver bullet." Technology is entirely incapable of ushering in a Utopian world. Even electrical power generation is effected by the fall into sin. However, Christians recognize that we have both freedom and responsibility with respect to energy choices, and solar-power represents one option that is a step in the right direction.

Derek Schuurman (dschuur@cs.redeemer.ca) is a professor at Redeemer University College whose office is located just below a neat row of shiny new photovoltaic cells.

Reviews

Scholarly advice for students in a world of divisions

Bert Den Boggende

First published in 2003 for a course at Taylor University, *Letters to Young Scholars* deserves a much wider readership than it has received as a class text. Ringenberg, in providing a comprehensive theological exploration for every area of human development and experience, invites the reader to a dialogue about the development of a Christian worldview.

He does so in several ways. For one, the book is devoid of jargon and easy to read; the chapters are only a few pages long, and they open with a page or more of quotes and end with some discussion questions and a short bibliography. This format makes it very attractive for discussion groups. The book is a challenging yet approachable education in worldview and theology.

The book explores seven broad areas of human experience: the human condition, encountering the divine, neighbourliness, toward maturity, institutions and structures, barriers to belief, and developing a workable philosophy of life. Within those seven headings, 46 smaller chapters explain such specific topics as hope, death, God's omnipotence, human freedom, the problem of pain, humility and governance – a diverse collection of topics ranging from popular culture to science and from politics to the will of God.



"Controversy typically has been the norm rather than the exception."

With so many topics it is only possible to highlight a few aspects. God's remoteness, Ringenberg argues, brings about a longing that leads to a search for God: "The ultimate solution to the problem of loneliness is to recognize and fully embrace the idea that we are made for nothing less than intimate fellowship with God both now in this imperfect order and eternally in his new order" (13).

He frequently gives practical advice. Regarding Scripture's interpretation he offers a number of points of helpful advice. Readers ought to seek to understand its major themes and interpret specific sections in light of these major themes. It is helpful to read a specific section according to its naturally intended meaning and interpret a passage within its immediate context rather than in isolation from it. One should also work to become a humble truth-seeker, recognizing how meditative Bible-reading can provide not only general truth that is for you and everyone else but also specific truth that is for you alone. Finally, Ringenberg suggests that you seek to apply the teachings of the Bible to your life, working to distinguish broad universal principles from specific applications.

Secondary themes, such as economic communism, obedience of wives, drinking wine, the use of force and lawsuits, may be questioned. Thus he advises to "reflect carefully on the fact that people as informed and as sincere as you in seeking to understand the biblical teaching will reach different conclusions from those which appear right to you" (117).

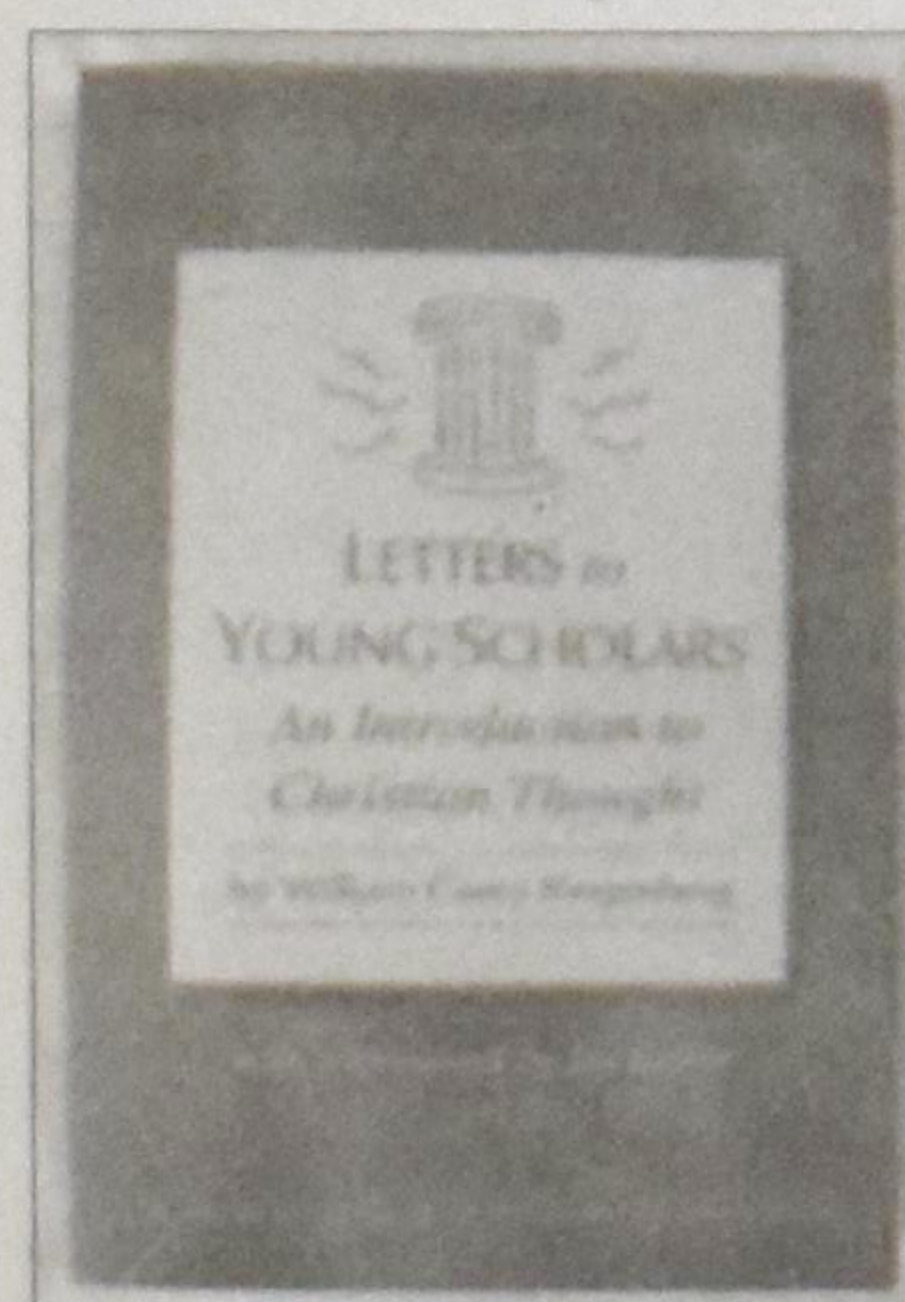
Evangelicals and fundamentalists are frequently accused of being closed-minded, but Ringenberg widens the accusation, arguing that the problem of the closed mind has been with us ever since humankind has had something to hide. Closed-mindedness is a result of willfulness and fear. In contrast, openness enables one to pursue truth.

Ringenberg provides some much-needed principles in case we are engaged in controversy. One ought to value truth more than their pride, as well as always be open to new light. When frustrated, we should humbly remember that God distributes his wisdom widely. Christians should allow for compromise on secondary issues but not on primary ones. When one encounters difference, they should always exercise kindness, recognizing that the providence of God may allow for differing perspectives. Finally, believers ought to accept the idea that reconciliation of human viewpoints is not altogether possible nor necessarily desirable and learn how to live in an environment of differing perspectives. As much as it is possible, differences should be celebrated.

He touches upon several controversial issues. Homosexuality is sensitively discussed. He places the kinds of music sung in church in a very helpful historical context, concluding that "controversy typically has been the norm rather than the exception" (236). Concerning war and pacifism he tries to balance the strength and weakness of both sides, ultimately favouring a just war theory. He does not, however, submit this theory to his usual thorough scrutiny. Perhaps this may be due, or at least partly, to his understanding of governance.

Community building, for which he discusses nine principles, he defines as "the acting out organizationally of the second greatest commandment" (268). Throughout the book this idea plays a significant role. This emphasis on relationships, together with its well balanced, humble yet scholarly approach, should make the book a joy to read for the novice as well as the more advanced scholar.

Bert Den Boggende
(bertdenb@yahoo.com)
lives in Brooks, Alta.

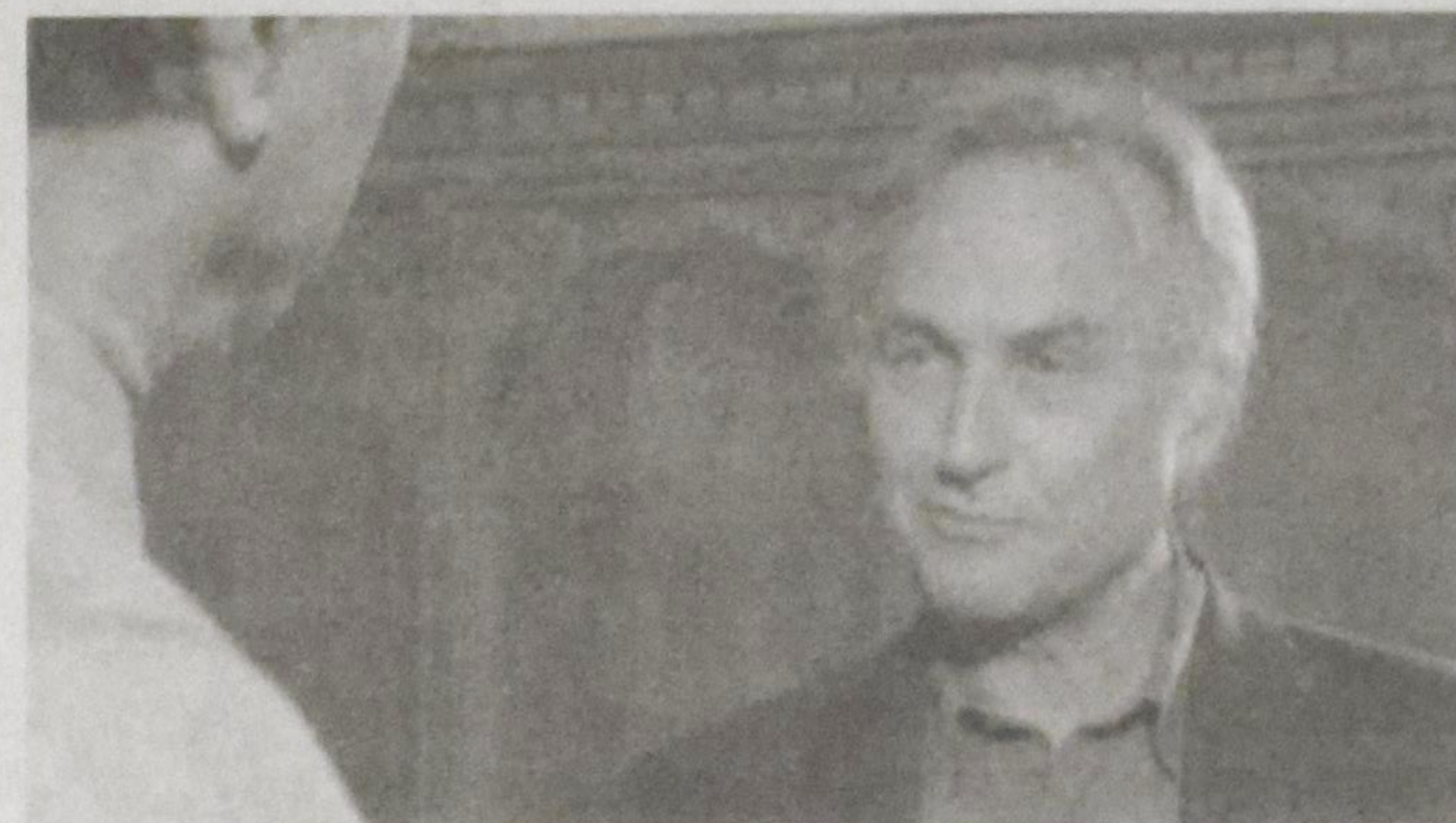


Letters to Young Scholars:
An Introduction to
Christian Thought
by William Cary Ringenberg,
(Upland: Taylor University Press, 2010).

Scientist and theologian takes on Dawkins and the New Atheists

Nick Schuurman

A while back, a video featuring a prominent atheist academic went viral. It showed him holding out a hair dryer at a public lecture, inviting members of the audience to come forward, renounce whatever bits of faith they had left, and be "de-baptized" into atheism. While clearly making a joke of it all (he was also dressed in monk's garb), the clip exposed something of the nature of the debates involving "New Atheism." There are, on one hand, a lot of legitimate discussions taking place, involving people conversant in the language of the debate who have some idea of what they are talking about. On another level, however, the conversation has been reduced to soundbites, inflammatory rhetoric and blow dryers.



McGrath (left) and Dawkins squaring off in debate.

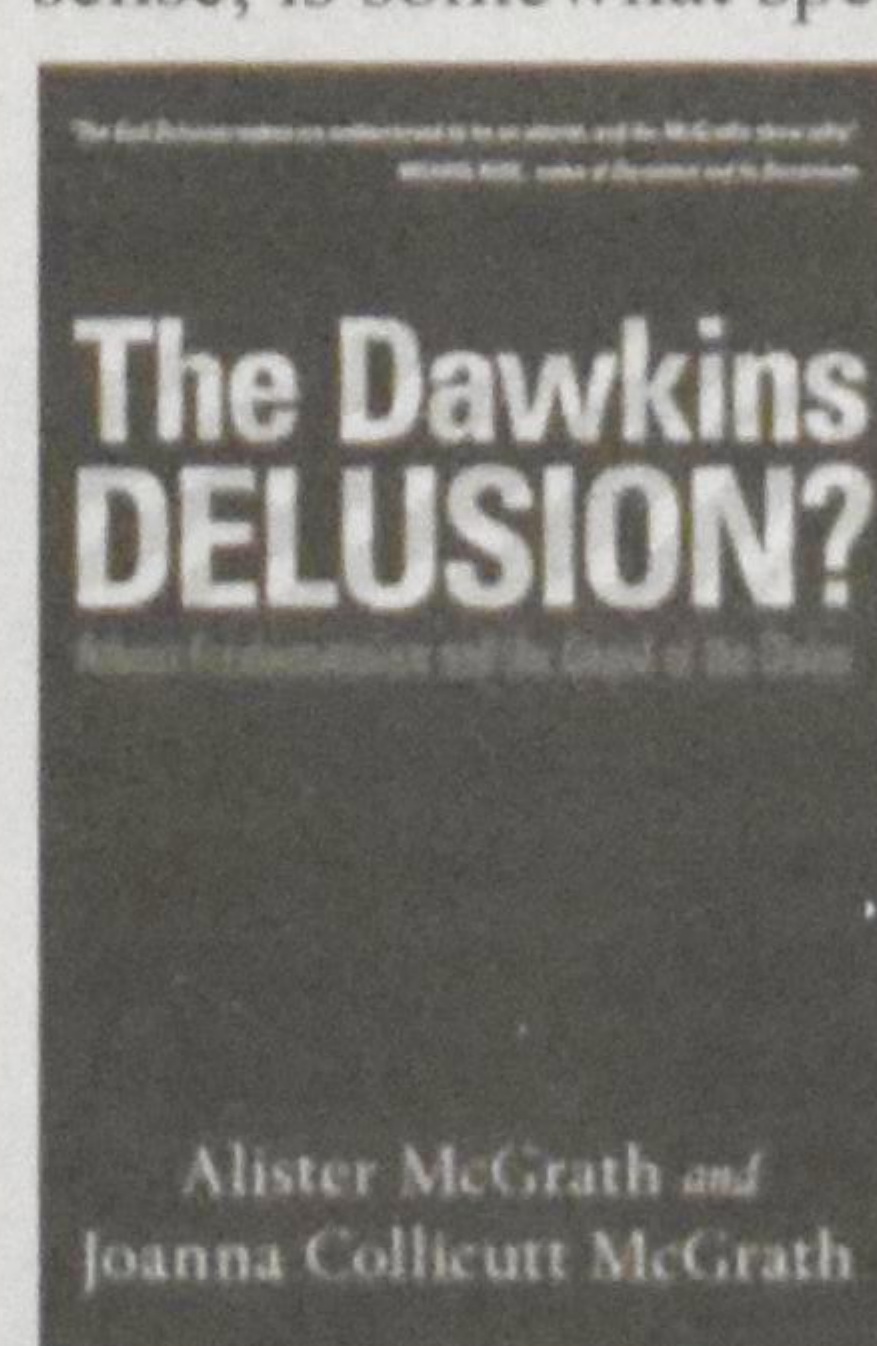
Allister McGrath attempts to "be the better man," so to speak, by beginning this book on a more civil note. He admits that he has a great deal of respect for biologist Richard Dawkins' work as a scientific popularizer, and admires his ability to communicate. In the context of a debate that has all too often detracted into one-liners and name-calling, this comes as a breath of fresh air. The sentiment, however, only lasts for one paragraph before McGrath sets off on his response to the polemic.

McGrath, who currently holds the chair of theology at Kings College in London, explains how he and Dawkins actually held a great deal in common. Both were Oxford academics involved in the study of the natural sciences, and both held to an evidence-based understanding of the world. On that basis of the evidence, however, the two eventually came to very different conclusions about the nature and existence of God.

It is with a genuine sense of wonder that McGrath questions how two intellectuals could come to such antagonistic understandings of the universe. Dawkins, one of the most prominent public figures arguing for atheism, would suggest that it is because people have bought into a "God Delusion" (the title of his most popular polemic against religion, which McGrath in turn parodies here). And while McGrath at first seems to give the old playground retort, he admits that there must be something else going on. Hints of the answer, he suggests, were articulated by Stephen Jay Gould, who posited that the natural sciences are consistent with both atheism and conventional religious belief.

Rather than providing responses to each of Dawkins' arguments (such a rebuttal, McGrath admits, would prove to be "catatonically boring"), the book "sets out to do one thing and one thing only – assess the reliability of Dawkins' critique of faith in God" (15). He admits that this is a short volume, and that much more could have been written in response, but he instead chose to focus on addressing the major themes presented in *The God Delusion*: "Is God really a delusion?" "Has science disproved God?" "What are the origins of religion?" "Is religion evil?" These are some of the most troubling questions that Dawkins presents in his polemic, and the questions that McGrath attempts to answer.

If readers are looking for a primer on apologetics or the relationship between science and Christianity, both the author and this reviewer suggest that they look elsewhere. The book functions primarily as a companion and response to *The God Delusion*, and in that sense, is somewhat specific in its approach and focus.



The Dawkins Delusion?
Atheist Fundamentalism
and the Denial of the Divine
by Allister McGrath and
Joanna Collicutt McGrath.
Downers Grove, IL:
Intervarsity Press, 2007.

"New Atheism," as it has been called, is distinguished from other forms of the position in its open willingness to attack the beliefs of organized religion. Proponents, including Dawkins, believe that religion should not simply be tolerated but exposed for what it is, "a delusion." In the current cultural context of the West, this whole discussion is a bit of a curious phenomenon. Tolerance, respect for diverse systems of belief, and pluralism being the names of democratic capitalism's game, one perhaps might not have anticipated this growing debate.

McGrath is a voice for the intellectual credibility of a life of faith. In the face of an increasingly large body of evidence supporting evolution, and the growing trends of anti-intellectualism within the North American church and anti-Christian sentiment from without, *The Dawkins Delusion?* offers a deft rebuttal to the New Atheists.

Nick Schuurman
(reviews@christiancourier.ca)
is CC's review editor.



Features

The rise of the 'new atheism'

Guenther ("Gene") Haas

Over the past ten years a number of books have been published by several atheists promoting atheism (usually by connecting it with Darwinian evolution) and rejecting a belief in God. Since these men live in western societies where there is a historical heritage of Christianity, their criticism is often focussed on Christianity and the claims of the Bible. Given the rise of violent Islamic fundamentalism and its acts of terrorism in the past decade, they also direct their negative comments at Islam, frequently drawing a connection between the beliefs and behaviour of Muslims and Christians.

There are four authors that are identified as part of this new movement, sometimes referred to as "the four horsemen." The two lesser known authors are Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett. Harris studied philosophy, and has a Ph. D. in neuroscience. He and his wife founded the Reason Project, an organization drawing together like-minded atheists in various fields to critique religion in all its forms, and to provide critical rational input into all areas of public life. He has published articles in popular and scientific academic publications. He has appeared on media programs, and has lectured on numerous university campuses. His books include *The End of Faith* (2004), *Letters to a Christian Nation* (2006), and *The Moral Landscape* (2010). The books critique religion in all its forms, and argue for a secular scientific basis for human morality and well-being.

Daniel Dennett is a professor of philosophy at Tufts University. He is a member of many atheist and secularist organizations, including the Reason Project. His academic writings promote an evolutionary understanding of the mind and science. The book in which he gives a secular evolutionary explanation of religion is *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2006). He interacts with well-known Christian philosopher, Alvin Plantinga, in his newest book, *Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?* (2010).

The two most well-known new atheists are Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. Hitchens is a journalist whose syndicated columns are carried in many newspapers in North America. He is an avowed atheist with little good to say about any religion. His recent book is *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007).

The most well-known atheist author is Richard Dawkins. Dawkins is an evolutionary biologist. He held the chair of Professor for Public Understanding of Science at the University of Oxford from 1995 to 2008. He is now an emeritus fellow of the university, and a member of numerous humanist societies, which critique religion and promote rational and scientific atheism. His book, *The God Delusion* (2006), has sold over two million copies in English, and has been translated into over 30 languages.

Dawkins is critical of both the belief in God and the notion that the universe manifests evidence of having been created by an Intelligent Designer. He is an advocate for Darwin's theory of natural selection because, he contends, it explains with greater economy and elegance the existence of all living creatures on this planet, including humans. He argues that a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist and that religious faith is a delusion – a persistent false belief in the face of contradictory evidence. He states: "When one person suffers from a delusion it is called insanity. When many people suf-

fer from a delusion, it is called religion." Dawkins sees religion as subverting science, fostering fanaticism, encouraging bigotry against homosexuals, and influencing society in other negative ways. He considers the teaching of religion by parents, and teachers in religious schools, as a form of mental abuse.

The impact of the Enlightenment

Atheism is not new. Psalm 14, written by King David about 1,000 B.C. refers to the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God." There have always been atheists in western society. What is new about our situation in the 21st century is that we are living with the impact of the Enlightenment on western culture. The elevation of reason to the place of ultimate authority for determining truth, in league with the methods of modern science, has led to a confidence in human scientific rationality to know the truth. Darwin's theory of naturalistic evolution has given ammunition to modern atheists. Dawkins

himself wrote in an earlier book, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."

Atheism is also supported by the progressive adoption of secularism in most spheres of Western society today. This has been accompanied by the gradual marginalization of Christianity as an influence in the public domain. The result is that an increasing number of people accept a secular perspective on matters of public and social concern. When challenges arise, the tendency is to appeal to science and technology as providing the solutions to our problems. It is in this cultural context that atheism has an ever

greater appeal to people.

What is new about the new atheism is that the proponents do not think that religious believers deserve respect. In the past atheists disagreed with Christians about the existence of God, but they were willing to have cordial relations with them. This is no longer the case for the "four horsemen" of atheism. They argue that recent scientific advancements, as well as the religious fanaticism that led to the events of September 11, 2001, require atheists to be much more critical of the superstitions and dangerous beliefs of religious people. The new atheists are critical of fellow atheists who strive to build positive relationships with Christians.

The result is that the writings and talks of the new atheists are full of insult, ridicule and mockery. They misrepresent Christian viewpoints, which they then easily refute. They engage in wilful distortions of history, failing to see any positive impact of Christianity on Western society. They refuse to acknowledge that there have been Christian leaders who have been guided by biblical themes to implement positive change in society. For example, in an interview on CBC television Dawkins would not admit, when pressed by the interviewer, that Dr. Martin Luther King, a Baptist minister, was influenced by Christian teachings on equality in taking leadership in the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s. Conversely, Dawkins dismissed the interviewer's challenges that many of the great evils of the twentieth century were caused by atheist movements, such as communism and Nazism; Dawkins unconvincingly suggested that Adolph Hitler and the ruthless Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, were actually Christians.

Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*, received so many negative comments from fellow atheists and evolutionary scientists that in the preface of the second edition, he defended the book from their criticisms. Alvin Plantinga wrote a scathing review of the book in which he states that it is obvious that Dawkins is not a philosopher, and that his arguments would receive a failing grade in a philosophy course. Michael Ruse, an atheistic evolutionary professor of Biology, who taught at the University of Guelph for 35 years, says that Dawkins' book "makes me embarrassed to be an atheist." Similar kinds of criticism have also been expressed about the works of the other three atheist authors.

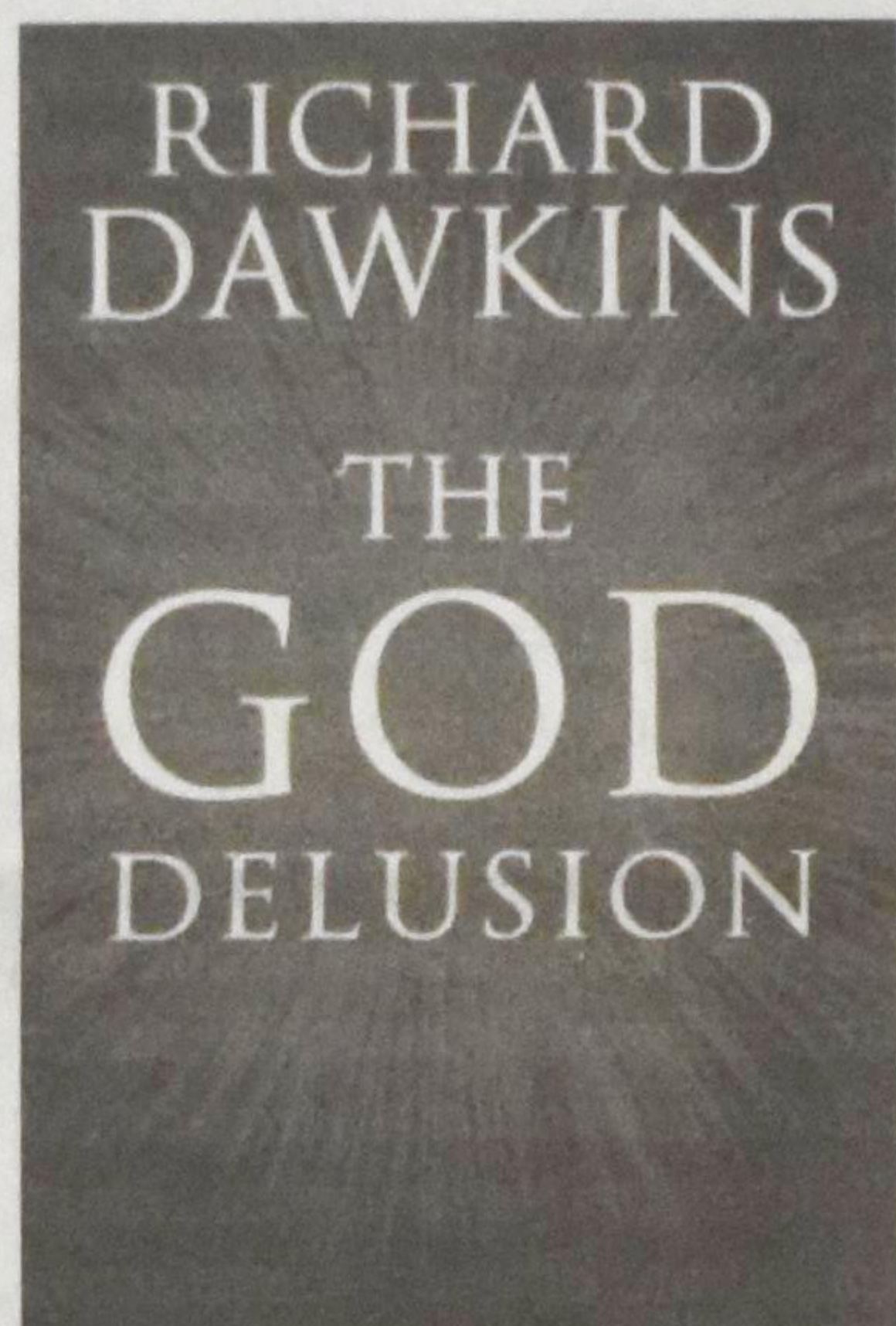
Widespread ignorance of Christianity

If these books present distortions of Christianity and its history, if they are poorly argued, and if they do such a poor job of dismissing the bloody history of secular movements in the twentieth century, why have these books been so popular? I think there are two reasons. First, the books are read and enthusiastically endorsed by fellow atheists, agnostics and secularists. In other words, they are embraced by those already holding these views. Second, the false historical information and distorted presentations of Christianity are believed by many people today because there is a widespread ignorance of Christianity in our culture. The mainstream media and entertainment industry tends to present Christians in a negative light; they report those stories of scandal, abuse or criminal activity by Christians. It is rare to have a positive story about Christianity or to see movies or television programs where Christians are presented positively. In such an environment, with so much ignorance of Christianity, people are more likely to accept the false ideas and poor arguments of the new atheists.

What should the Christian response be? Second Peter 3:15-16 urges believers to always be prepared to give an answer to those who ask us to give reasons for the hope that we have. So, we should give thoughtful and reasoned responses to the accusations and distortions. There are a number of good books published by Christians in response to the new atheists. Let me recommend two. There is *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* by Alister and Joanna McGrath. Another good book is *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller. Both books respond to the arguments against Christian belief that are presented in these atheists' books, and which are widely held by people in our society. But what both books also do very well is point out that the reasons for holding to atheism are incoherent and without foundation. In fact, they argue that it is more reasonable to hold to the beliefs of Christianity than to hold to atheism.

Finally, 2 Peter tells us to give our reasons for faith and respond to attacks with gentleness and respect. We should not respond in kind to the arguments of these new atheists, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 1:21). As the church has always understood, and as 2 Peter 3:16 tells us, it is our lives and treatment of our atheist opponents that will win them over, not primarily our better arguments. The faithful and obedient Christian living within a church community of service and love is the ultimate reason for the truth of the Christian faith, and the ultimate way to refute the malicious arguments of those who deny God. ➤

Dr. Gene Haas is a Professor of Religion & Theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.



Features

New Atheism hits home

Cathy Smith

In my church we often pray for those “who have strayed from the fold.” There’s an old-fashioned restraint to those words, a politeness that veils the pain of having family members leave the faith. Our children and grandchildren have slipped away to live a different life than the churchly one we love. Sometimes it’s tempting to rationalize that they still “love Christ, but don’t love his church” as author Ann Rice proclaimed about her own public stepping away. But I can’t engage in even that kind of comforting equivocation. One of my children is a committed Christian, while the two others, influenced by Dawkins and Hitchens, call themselves atheists.

Seeing my children blatantly reject my faith produces a devious kind of suffering, mostly kept under wraps. Once, in my online discussion group, a new member introduced himself by sharing that his children and their spouses and all his grandchildren follow the Lord. I was stung. No, lacerated. When others share that kind of blessing, it’s a boast blaring in my ears. It wasn’t meant that way. How could he know that I’m an open oozing sore on this topic? After faithful church attendance and support for Christian school at all three levels, devotions at meals and at bedtime, and as long a list as anyone can produce of spiritual habits and resources consistently implemented to encourage faith in my offspring, I counted on the Lord to bless my due diligence. I certainly didn’t expect atheism.

It’s a debilitating kind of pain that doesn’t resolve, the guilty kind that comes with questions of responsibility and perennial what-ifs hovering in the background each day and bloating as the years spin on. It is, after all, the most seductive thing in the world to imagine that we can mould our children, that we can input some spiritual data and print out a carbon-copy Christian mini-me. A careless reading of Scripture even seems to guarantee it: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and in the end he will not depart from it.” But that’s a proverb, not a money-back warranty. We persistently misconstrue our blessings as personal achievements because it happens just often enough that if we add **a** and **b**, we get **c**. Children raised in the fold, mostly stay in the fold. But life isn’t math, we’re not in control, and the Lord is in the heavens doing as he pleases (Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135: 6). How can we reconcile the fact that our Heavenly Father, who holds our lives in his hands, permits our precious covenant children, brought to the font and raised before his face, to walk away from that inheritance?

And why do our children choose to turn their backs on the church? Why have mine chosen to become atheists, of all things? You can’t begin to guess the nights I’ve spent awake tearing apart my life, analyzing where I went wrong, trying to understand why they reject the faith that is my very life-blood, so I can fix it, so I can change it. It’s wearying, and, of course, I can’t.



Tentative conclusions:

But, over time, I’ve arrived at some tentative conclusions.

1. The choice for atheism is not exclusively a rejection of the Christian faith, though it’s frequently portrayed as such, but a recoiling from all faith. It rejects the fanaticism of Islam and the rigidity of Orthodox Juda-

ism as well. Given our increasingly polarized globe, it’s not surprising that atheism is experiencing resurgence. *New York Times* editor, David Brooks, in “*If It Feels Right...*” (Sept. 12, 2011), describes the most recent research conducted by Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith about moral virtue and American youth. Smith’s book, *Lost in Transitions*, concludes: “The default position, which most [respondents] came back to again and again, is that moral choices are just a matter of individual taste. ‘It’s personal,’ the respondents typically said. ‘It’s up to the individual. Who am I to say?’” Brook writes, “Smith and company found an atmosphere of extreme moral individualism – of relativism and nonjudgmentalism.” I wonder if atheism legitimizes this individualism and gives it structure, a coat hook upon which to throw one’s hat.

You might protest, as I have done, “But surely our covenant children, raised in a community with a particularly clear moral paradigm, know better than their average North American peers! Perhaps we woefully underestimate the influence of culture on our children.” Psychology professor Jeffrey Jensen Arnett’s book, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from late Teens through the Twenties*, argues that our century will see a new category of life-stage emerge, similar to what happened with the arrival of the “teenager” in the previous one. Robin Marantz Henig, in her *New York Times* article, *Documenting the Life of 20-Somethings* (August 18, 2010), reveals the statistical facts upon which Arnett’s theory is based: “The 20s are a black box, and there is a lot of churning in there. One-third of people in their 20s move to a new residence every year. Forty percent move back home with their parents at least once. They go through an average of seven jobs in their 20s, more job changes than in any other stretch. Two-thirds spend at least some time living with a romantic partner without being married. And marriage occurs later than ever. The median age at first marriage in the early 1970s, when the baby boomers were young, was 21 for women and 23 for men; by 2009 it had climbed to 26 for women and 28 for men, five years in a little more than a generation.” Every one of these descriptors applies to both my children who have declared themselves atheists.

2. I think the science/religion controversy is a pivotal point of angst. In New Atheist literature, science is revered and Christianity is mocked for its insistence on a literal six-day creation in the face of the overwhelming acceptance of evolution by the majority of respected scientists of our day. For my own children, the evolution versus Genesis debate has been a significant issue. The critical discussions we are now having about how to interpret Genesis in a way that serves both theological and scientific truth have come too late for many of our twenty-somethings. They are no longer listening.

3. We haven’t created a safe place for doubt. The triangle of church, home and school can be claustrophobic. I was complicit in creating confining boundaries for my own kids, too. I was so afraid that they would follow my own youthful rebellious flight from church that I sought doubly hard to impress upon them the “rightness” of my faith perspective. J. D. Kirk, a New Testament professor at Fuller Seminary, writes in his blog about Drew Dyck’s *The Leavers*, a book which explores why young people are leaving the church in droves. Kirk writes, “But the point that interested me most was when he probed the reasons given for folks leaving: ‘Almost to a person, the leavers with whom I spoke recalled that, before leaving the faith, they were regularly shut down when they expressed doubts. Some were ridiculed in front of peers for asking insolent questions. Others reported receiving trite answers to vexing questions and being scolded for not accepting them.’” When Kirk tweeted, in response

to Dyck’s book, “Apologetics is bad for my soul. I’d rather have no answer to my doubts than a bad one,” it hit a nerve and went viral.

4. Lastly, I think that the church doesn’t always do a good job of being church. Shawn Graves posted a piece in *Christianity Today* (3/28/2011) called “*Why There Are Still Atheists: The heavens aren’t the only proclaimers (and are sometimes silent).*” In a plea for humility as we interact with our atheist neighbours, he concludes: “We ought to confess that our religious proclamations haven’t been as clear and compelling as the heavens and the skies in proclaiming ‘the glory of God and the work of his hands,’ that our lives haven’t ‘made it plain’ that God exists.” I want to convey to my non-believing children a nuanced understanding – that the church is full of sinners because perfect people don’t need a Saviour, and that it’s a place where sanctification grows, but sometimes falteringly. I want to explain that it takes an investment of time and loyalty to see and love the church as a broken - but still priceless – vessel. But maybe such a vision can only be nurtured from within, and they are no longer in the building.

Lingering questions and beyond

In the case of my children’s atheist stance, no doubt their own personalities and familial factors play a role, too. I have their permission to write about this, but it’s possible they would offer a completely different spin. Our evolution into a family with opposing world and life views has had its raw and wounding moments. We’ve stepped back from dialogue, preferring, for now, not to tackle the “provocative” subjects. I pray for them; they temper their opinions around me. Perhaps someday there will be space for genuine dialogue. For now, I try to let my life speak for itself in the practice of my faith and in my unwavering love for them. And I have one child who is a professing Christian, so, in the end, I have no answers that satisfy. I’m left with lingering questions. Why only one believing child? Why not all?

Only when I surrender to God the design of my life am I able to achieve equilibrium. When I recognize that it’s neither my conscientious parenting that wins my child for Christ, nor my failures that cause my child to walk away from Christ, I stumble gratefully into Gilead. Not my obedience or lack of it, but God’s sovereignty. I must relinquish control to the One who answers out of the storm (Job 38:1). I have to lay my life on the altar and confess: Lord, this is not what I expected or what I worked for. Forgive my prideful thinking that I could make it happen. Forgive my self-centeredness in always worrying about my own family, my constant whining to have things my own way. Help me to look around and notice that others have pain too. All kinds of it. Help me to minister to their pain.

And more: Lord, I really, really want the blessing of having all my children be faithful Christians. Yet you have decided that this isn’t my blessing to have right now. Maybe never. Help me submit to your will in all things, even in this. You have given me other blessings. Help me to use those blessings to be Christ to all I meet.

When I can pray this way, it’s possible to refrain from picking at my own scabs. It’s possible to love my children without nagging or manipulation. It’s possible to rejoice in the blessings of others. It’s possible to have and to be the peace of Christ. ➤

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is features editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ontario.



Feature

blog: (n) short for weblog, a website containing an online journal with reflections, comments and links.

Christian Courier gives you a glimpse into current Christian thinking by presenting excerpts from a variety of interesting blogs. Blogs are usually free-association, occasional, off-the-cuff and may not conform to the standards of print publication.



Matt Appling's lively blog, *The Church of No People* (thechurchofnopeople.com), is fun to read. Even his header is creative, changing frequently to mirror the weather or complement his topic of the day. His writing is fearless and hip. He blogs about a wide diversity of topics, from the academic, such as this interview with Bruce Sheiman, to the humorous and poignant, such as his description of a "date" with his wife at a fertility clinic.

Matt introduces himself:

For starters, I'm a pastor at a house church called Levi's House. I'm also a school teacher. I used to be, among other things, a graphic designer and youth pastor. I live with my wife, Cheri, and our two dogs in the Midwest.

So, what's this blog all about?

On Sundays I preach. They're usually pretty good messages. This blog is full of all the messages that "didn't make it," messages that might make people second guess why I'm their pastor. So I put them here, in the church where no one's around to read them. I realized that pastors may be tempted sometimes to hold back hard truths when it might



offend the people writing their paycheck. But the message changes when a pastor has nothing to lose! That's the idea behind the blog.

Atheist interview: Bruce Sheiman

God is not great.

That's what Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and other loud, militant atheists think. They're kind of the atheist equivalent of Pat Robertson. They're all busy writing books with titles like *God is Not Great* and *The God Delusion*. They're on a quest of love and compassion to free you, me and the rest of society from the bondage that is religion, so that we can live "enlightened," "scientific" lives. Lucky us!

Then, there's Bruce Sheiman.

Bruce Sheiman is an atheist. But he thinks religion is great. In fact, he thinks it's better than great. He thinks people have produced their greatest civilizations and achieved their greatest humanity through religion. And he thinks his fellow atheists who say religion is poison are being intellectually dishonest charlatans. And, best of all, he's got the guts to say so.

He wants you to know that the very loud atheists writing books don't speak for the rest of them. So he wrote a book. It's aptly titled *An Atheist Defends Religion*.

This book is awesome. It's probably the most unique take on history you'll read anytime soon. It's not goofy like most evangelical "historians." It's not poisonous like most atheist historians. It's honest. And coupled with that honest look at history, Bruce rebukes atheists for their abuse of science and their dishonest motives. Bruce rides a fine line – he's an atheist, but he calls himself an *aspiring theist*. He's sympathetic to religious aspirations. He just hasn't experienced God himself. He's also a really smart guy, but his book is brief and light on its feet.

I was pretty excited when Bruce's publicity team contacted me, asking me to review the book. I got really excited when it turned out to be a good book, so I agreed. But knowing that interviews are more fun than book reports, I told them I also had to ask Bruce some questions too. You are not going to want to miss this. Here's Bruce Sheiman.

While angry militant atheism seems to be on the rise with leaders like Richard Dawkins or Christopher Hitchens, you say they don't really speak for normal atheists like yourself. Many Christians have been uncomfortable for years with their spokesmen being guys like Pat Robertson and James Dobson. Do you think the rise of loud militant atheism is a reaction to loud political Christianity?

Let's be clear, it is questionable whether there has actually been a rise in militant atheism. More likely, there has been an increase in the vociferousness of existing militant atheism. And the writings of Harris, Hitchens, Dawkins and Dennett and all the others who have followed their lead have been able to bring existing angry, militant atheists together when previously they had been much more scattered around the country.

It's like a particular illness where the question is: Has there been an increase in the incidence or rather has there just been an increase in diagnosis? It is the same with militant atheism. As to why there is a rise in the loudness of these atheists, much is certainly the result of the fundamentalist wing of Christianity. But that increase in vocal atheism is just as much the result of the rise of political Islam.

America is positively saturated with Jesus. Can there be too much of a good thing when it comes to religion? If everyone practiced the same religion, would mankind finally be at peace?

I doubt it would produce a universal peaceful state, let alone the most prosperous state. I would say that there also is no way such a state of uniformity could exist. All ideological belief systems have extremist elements. And such tension is necessary for the growth of all societies as well as humanity itself. However, when such extremist elements dominate a particular ideology (religious or secular – e.g., Nazism, Communism) then it becomes dangerous.

If everyone practiced the same religion, I dare say that people would seek out differentiation that could translate into messy ideological conflict – such as Shi'ite Muslims

vs. Sunni Muslims, Catholics vs. Protestants, Sephardi vs. Ashkenazi, or conservatives vs. liberal in our country. It is almost like there is a need for some form of differentiation and opposition.

I thought so. People don't really like peace and harmony. We just like to sing about it. As you see it, are all faiths created equal when it comes to their ability to foster peace?

I lump religions together in my effort to understand "religion" that is generic and universal. So I describe it as belief in a Transcendent Spiritual Reality, which I believe applies equally to Eastern and Western religions; ancient and modern religions.

But the book singles out Christianity as the one "good" religion, along with Judaism. I am biased with a focus on the West. I acknowledge that Buddhism can certainly be a religion of peace and compassion like western religion; and I admit not to know enough about Hinduism to draw any definite conclusion. Perhaps the only religion that I cite as being negative is Islam.

Many Christians have never been atheists, don't know any atheists, or are scared and suspicious of them. How do you assure Christians that you are not some scary, amoral person as they may assume?

My girlfriend was shocked when she discovered I am an atheist.

In my book, I describe how at the same time that it is possible for atheists to be ethical people, yet religion makes for a more moral individual and society. As a moderate atheist, I envision my role as correcting the extremist pronouncements of the "militant" minority of atheists. I'm dedicated to conveying a kinder, gentler atheism.

How do Christians react when they find you are actually defending religion? Why are you defending religion anyway?

Christians are largely grateful that an atheist actually takes their side of the debate. A few more literalist Christians, however, found me risible in that I was not truly capable of experiencing God, which is a legitimate criticism. And I never claimed that I could.

Why do I defend religion? Remember, I am defending religion not God. That is something plausible just as it is possible to defend the scientific method or the capitalist system. I am defending the belief in God, but not the existence of God. And since I believe that religion is a net-positive in society, I wanted to make that argument to the militant atheists who offend me and many other tolerant, open-minded atheists.

That's funny. A lot of Christians are tired of being accused of not being tolerant or "open-minded."

A lot of militant atheists seem to be driven by a desire to "free" the world from the cruel bonds of religion. What do you believe drives this desire? Are these atheists full of compassion for their fellow, misinformed man? They seem to be too much in "attack" mode to really be full of love.

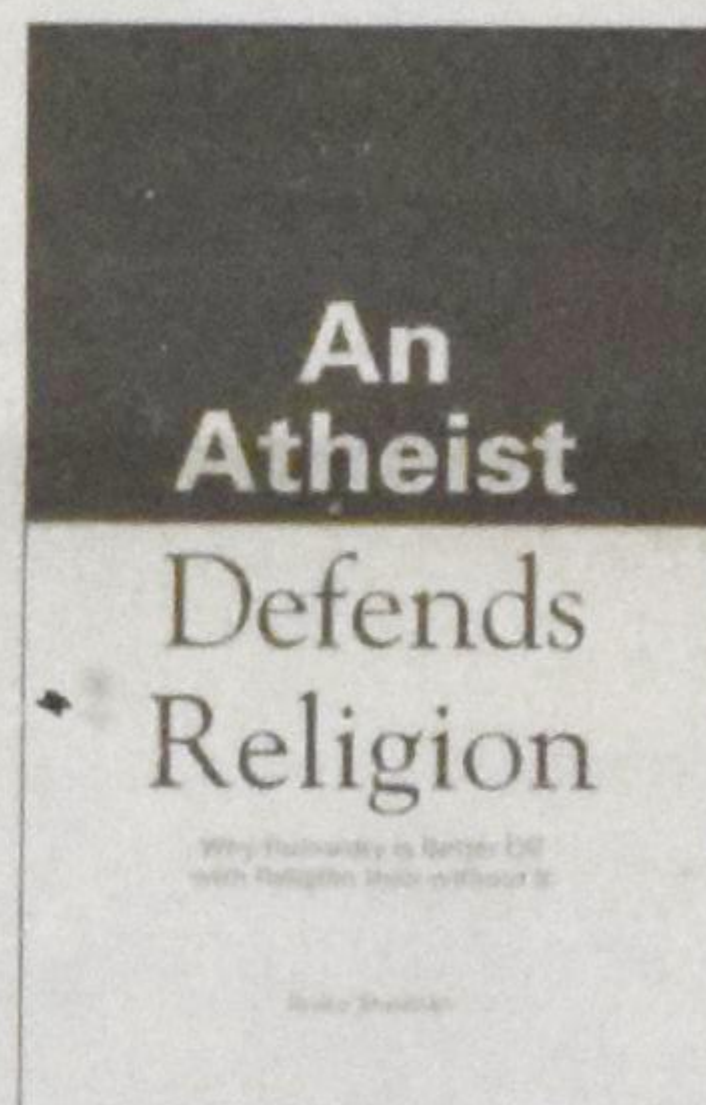
Gosh! I make your exact argument in my first blog entry. The reason it was not in the book is that one of the editors, who is an atheist, objected to my claims that militant atheists do not want to see humanity improve.

My definition of a militant atheist is someone who denies the beliefs held by people who are happier than he is. To aggressive atheists, the only legitimate response to religious faith is an unrelenting assault on its credence using the tools of reason and science. But by arguing for the elimination of all religion, they are essentially a mirror image of their fundamentalist enemy.

I don't think militant atheists are unhappy merely because they deny God; I also think they deny God because they're unhappy. As proof, one need look no further than Christopher Hitchens to find a correlation between atheism and a cranky, crotchety, crabby personality.

It should be clear that these atheists are not motivated by a love for their fellow human beings. Their strident, arrogant and belligerent posture reveals a palpable contempt for humanity.

Seriously, what do you think of that? Pow, right in the kisser, huh? For more from Bruce, buy the book for a low price on Amazon. You won't regret it.



Columns

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



Recently the CRTC, in its wisdom, mandated all Canadian television networks to switch from analogue to digital broadcasting. Ninety percent of households in Canada receive their television signals through either cable or satellite and are unaffected by the change. Jack and I are among the few who still use an outdoor antenna. Fortunately, our television is only two years old and has the capacity to convert the signal for us. As a result, we've lost a couple of the weaker stations, but those that remain are now amazingly clear. The problem is that there's still precious little worth watching.

We actually tried satellite TV several years ago. Unwilling to pay anything beyond the basic monthly fee, we ended up with not much more than CTV channels from coast to coast. We could watch Corner Gas at all hours, but lost our local newscast in the deal. After a year or so we returned to the antenna. Even when we stay in hotels on our travels, flipping through dozens of channels proves pointless. There's a serious shortage of decent entertainment.

Three out of the six stations we still get are operated by the CTV network. They offer a spate of "reality" programming – shows like Canadian Idol, Dancing with the Stars and So You Think You Can Dance Canada (arguably the most annoying of all). Jack calls it "So You Think You Can Dance in Your Underpants." Neither one of us can even sit through its commercials, which feature scantily clad young people convulsing violently across the stage. Yes, they are talented, but forget about grace and decorum.

Good movies are also few and far between, so we've taken to watching vintage TV series on DVD. We just finished the first season of Hawaii Five-O from 1968. Our daughter Stephanie picked



Detective Kono and his "surfer chick" replacement.



And there's still nothing on

it up for us when she heard that we've been watching the remake of that series. I'm not overly fond of either edition, but it is fun to compare one with the other.

The original series ran for 12 years. I remember seeing a few episodes once I was old enough to stay up that late. I thought the main character, Steve McGarrett (played by Jack Lord), was pretty old. Ironically, 42 years later, he looks much younger. Of course the modern day protagonist (Alex O'Loughlin) is young enough to be my son.

I find it amusing that Detective Kono, originally portrayed by a massive Hawaiian known only as Zulu, has now been replaced by a skinny little surfer chick (Grace Park).

Times have changed

In 1968 skirts were short, pants were flared and the average pair of eyeglasses looked as if they should come with their own windshield wipers. The original McGarrett drove a Mercury Marquis with a trunk big enough to house a small village. At least you could tell a Chevy from a Ford. Telephones had rotary dials and cords attached. Cell phones didn't exist. If McGarrett needed to communicate with Danno out in the field, he radioed headquarters and asked to be patched through. Computers were extremely rare, and roughly the size of a walk-in closet.

Far from politically correct, McGarrett of old commonly referred to women as "honey," (even those whom he'd just met). His idea of witty banter was to call Chin Ho "fatso" now and then. In one episode he actually barged past his secretary, grunted at her and pointed to the coffee maker as he made his way to his own office. What a charmer.

Mangled corpses and half-naked bodies were mercifully absent from the show. The straightforward story lines were bolstered by lots of action and spectacular scenery. And there was never a need to dwell upon complicated personal relationships. These were *real* cops – married to their work.

A blessing in disguise

There's nothing wrong with a little mindless entertainment once in awhile, as long as I limit my intake. It's probably a blessing that there's not much to watch on television. Too much time in front of the boob-tube would crowd out thoughts of those lovely, admirable and praiseworthy things that are supposed to fill the Christian's mind. Evenings are better spent on a good book or quiet conversation.

Advertisements for the new fall line up are out. Looks like another dismal viewing season ahead. Oh well, good thing my friend Gerty gave me the first two seasons of *The Bob Newhart Show* for my birthday.

After all, as Archie Bunker once said to his son-in-law, "It ain't a boob-tube unless there's a boob sitting in front of it." ✂

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvaarderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ontario.

Artful Eye



Moses and the Burning Bush, Sébastien Bourdon, French engraver and painter (1616 – 1671)

Staying Power

In appreciation of Maxim Gorky at the International Convention of Atheists. 1929

Like Gorky, I sometimes follow my doubts
outside and question the metal sky,
longing to have the fight settled, thinking
I can't go on like this, and finally I say

all right, it is improbable, all right, there
is no God. And then as if I'm focusing
a magnifying glass on dry leaves, God blazes up.
It's the attention, maybe, to what isn't

there that makes the notion flare like
a forest fire until I have to spend the afternoon
dragging the hose to put it out. Even
on an ordinary day when a friend calls,

tells me they've found melanoma,
complains that the hospital is cold, I say God.
God, I say as my heart turns inside out.
Pick up any language by the scruff of its neck,

wipe its face, set it down on the lawn,
and I bet it will toddle right into the godfire
again, which – though they say it doesn't
exist – can send you straight to the burn unit.

Oh, we have only so many words to think with.
Say God's not fire, say anything, say God's
a phone, maybe. You know you didn't order a phone,
but there it is. It rings. You don't know who it could be.

You don't want to talk, so you pull out
the plug. It rings. You smash it with a hammer
till it bleeds springs and coils and clobbered up
metal bits. It rings again. You pick it up
and a voice you love whispers hello.

Jeanne Murray Walker is a professor at the University of Delaware and past Poetry Editor of Christianity and Literature. Staying Power is reprinted here with permission. It was first published in Poetry Magazine (Chicago), and reprinted in NEW TRACKS, NIGHT FALLING (Wm. B. Eerdmans). For more information about Jeanne Murray Walker, check out her website at jeannemurraywalker.com.



Columns

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang



I spoke to a friend this morning, and it was a miracle.

My friend isn't sick. In fact, he's healthy and young and vibrant. And yet speaking to him – the simple act of having a conversation – is a miracle.

Consider this:

There are seven billion people alive on the planet, right now. So – leaving aside a few complicated variables like geography and social networks – in absolute terms, the odds of having a conversation with a specific person on the planet, right now, are one in seven billion. Now, consider that the number of people alive today is only a part of the total number of people who have ever been alive. Using a formula developed by a mathematician named Nathan Keyfitz, the approximate number of people who have ever lived is 110 billion. Which makes the possibility of two people meeting in an exact time in history and having a conversation pretty remote. And, since we don't know exactly when history will end, it's possible

Silence wins, hands down

that a great many more people will follow after us – making that possibility shrink even more.

Let's narrow it down further:

Somewhere between five and 40 million people in the world are deaf. So there's a one in 1,000 chance that the person you're speaking to at any given time can't hear you. There are no global statistics on how many people might be mute, but there are about one million people living in the United States who have aphasia so the worldwide number, again, must be in the millions.

Now, let's pull back a little further.

For sound to travel, it needs molecules – like air or water – to travel through. Sound is a compression wave, so in order for it to move, it has to shift molecules ahead of it, which carries the sound.

In the vast void of space, there is no air for the particles to travel through. So it is soundless.

The universe is conservatively estimated to be 150 billion light years in diameter. Of course, no one really knows for sure, but when you consider that, travelling at the

speed of light, it would take you 150 billion years to cross it – even if that smallish number is accurate, that's ... big.

Now within that massive space, the only place we know of where sound can pass through the air and travel from a human ear to the human mouth is a little blue planet 12,757 kms in diameter.

So here's an analogy:

The odds of you having a conversation with another person, right now, is like two grains of sand colliding ... on a Wednesday ... at 8:13 am ... in 1863 ... at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. In fact, it's probably even less probable than that.

Now, before I'm flooded with emails from armchair mathematicians, I have to admit – by mutual agreement between me and my high-school – I never took math past Grade 11.

But even if I'm half-right, it's still a miracle.

We think a conversation between two people is the most normal thing in the world.

But it's really one of the most abnormal things in time and space.

What's normal – in cosmic terms – is silence.

And in the end, our own silence is something that predates us ... and long outlasts us, too.

And since we don't know exactly what our eternal home looks – and sounds – like, all we can say with certainty is this:

For untold years, you had no voice.

For untold years to come, you won't be heard.

Only now ... in the sliver of time you have ... on this little world of ours ... in the vastness of space ... you have an opportunity to speak to your friends and your family.

In the end – as the song lyric says – “silence wins, hands down.”

So when you think about it, the next conversation you'll have is a miracle.

A gift.

And every word counts. ✂

Lloyd Rang lives in Bowmanville, Ontario

My Window Seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



When this column is published, the province of Ontario will have just completed its 40th general election. But as I'm writing, the writ has recently dropped – meaning that provincial parliament

is dissolved and election signs are allowed to colour front lawns and show neighbours which political stripe you belong to.

I'm frustrated with most politicians. In grade seven, my teacher took us to the Ontario Legislative Building, commonly referred to as Queen's Park. Although what goes on during Parliament usually isn't worthy of being associated with the word “park.”

I sat there as a 12-year-old fascinated with the huge room, the luxurious chairs and the order of business, but mostly by how the politicians spoke to each other. I thought to myself “I've often wanted to speak to adults like that!” But when I tried, I was shot down. My teacher even ensured that I wasn't allowed to speak to my friend Danny on the bus in the same manner that the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the Premier during parliament.

I have yet to find a politician that I hold in such a regard that I will allow them to use my private property as advertising space.

This got me thinking of using signs or putting them on the front lawn for reasons other than politics. What would happen if we decided as a community that it was okay to put up signs on the front lawn for reasons we deemed important?

Reading the signs

Beyond political lawn signs

How about a sign that says “HAVING FIVE CHILDREN AGES FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT AND NINE IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR SLEEP CYCLE.” Maybe my five-year-old wouldn't wake me up so early. Or, “IT IS BETTER TO BE KIND THAN TO BE RIGHT.” Wise instruction indeed.

I've seen signs in front of a restaurant that proclaimed “Warning: any children left unattended will be washing dishes or sold to the circus” and “Warning: any children left unattended will be given a free puppy and an espresso.” Clever child management.

A man who wanted to sell his house for higher than the other comparable houses in his neighbourhood decided to put this sign up *before* he listed his house for sale. “THIS HOUSE IS NOT FOR SALE.” He kept that sign up for weeks before taking it down and actually listing the house and putting up a FOR SALE SIGN. His plan worked and his house sold in two days for higher than the comparable sale price. The power of psychology.

I returned home one day after stopping at a garage sale to buy what I thought was a beautiful old oak easel with a blackboard sign and chalk. Unsure of how my wife would welcome what I thought was beautiful art, I wrote on the blackboard “ONE PERSON'S JUNK IS ANOTHER PERSON'S SPOUSE'S HEADACHE.” It worked well enough because we still have it.



Ecumenical relations?

Church signs

Churches have been using signs for years. “HONK IF YOU LOVE JESUS. TEXT IF YOU WANT TO MEET HIM.”

There's a story on the internet about a “sign war” between two churches, a Presbyterian and a Roman Catholic. The signs were said to be across the street from each other. The Catholic Church initially put up “ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN” on their sign. This got a response from the Presby-

terian Church: “ONLY HUMANS GO TO HEAVEN READ THE BIBLE.” The Catholic church responded with “GOD LOVES ALL HIS CREATIONS – DOGS INCLUDED.” The response from the Presbyterians? “DOGS DON'T HAVE SOULS – THIS IS NOT OPEN TO DEBATE.” The Catholic sign soon read “CATHOLIC DOGS GO TO HEAVEN – PRESBYTERIAN DOGS CAN TALK TO THEIR PASTOR.” The Presbyterians responded with “CONVERTING TO CATHOLICISM DOESN'T MAGICALLY GRANT YOUR DOG A SOUL,” to which the Catholic sign retorted “FREE DOG SOULS WITH CONVERSION.” The next response from the Presbyterians: “DOGS AREN'T ANIMALS. THERE ARE NO ROCKS IN HEAVEN EITHER.” Apparently the Catholic sign ended the debate with “ALL ROCKS GO TO HEAVEN.”

Maybe signs aren't the best place for theological debate. But they can certainly be entertaining. ✂

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the director of the Music Therapy Program at Bethesda, an organization that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives near St. Catharines, Ontario.

Columns

The Public Square

Harry Antonides

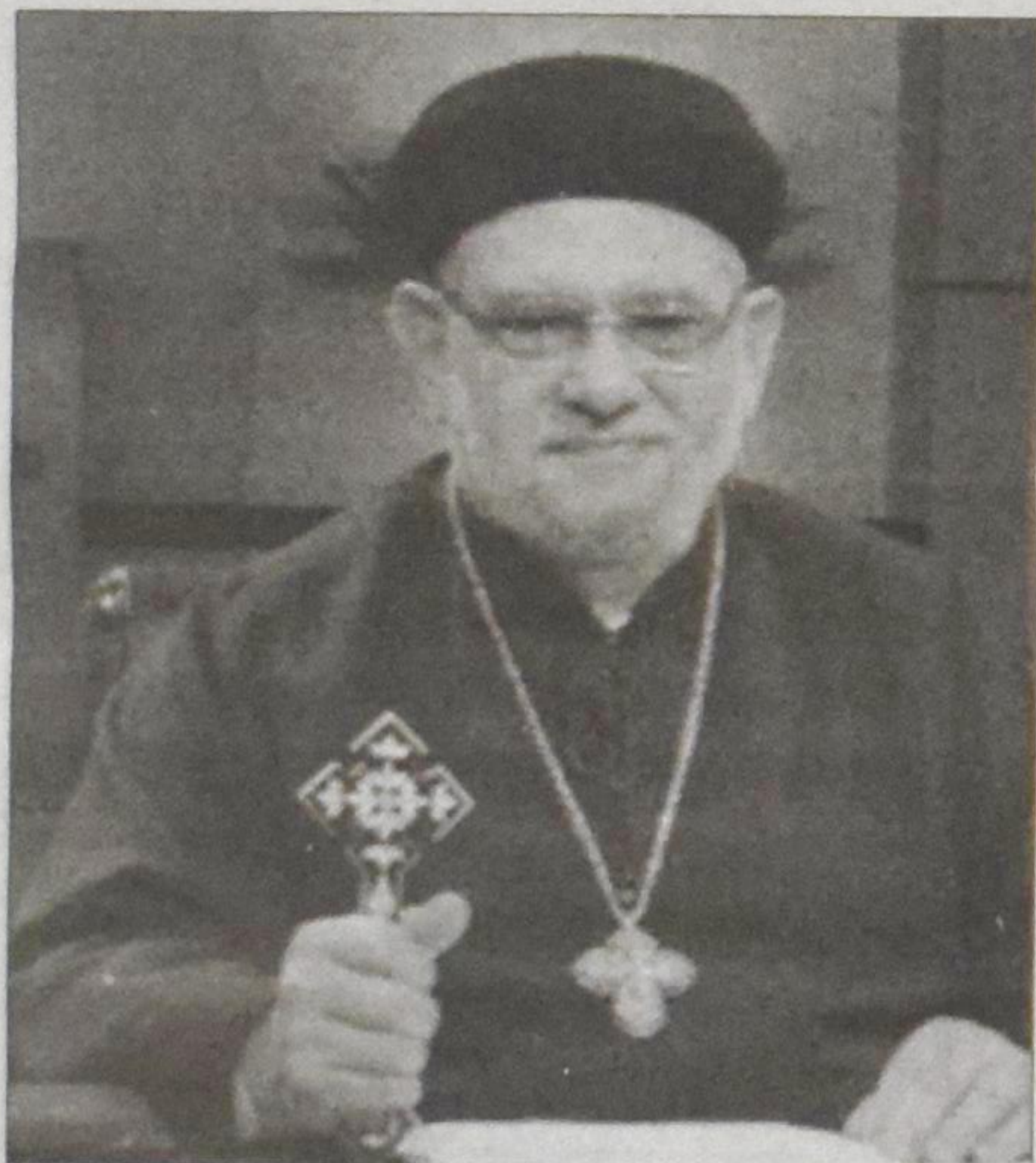


My guess is that very few in the West have heard of Zakaria Botros, a fearless proclaimer of the Good News to the Muslim, Arabic speaking world. In contrast, he is very well known in the Muslim world, where he has been

described as Public Enemy #1 with a multi-million dollar fatwa on his head. Al Qaeda has called him "one of the most wanted infidels of the world."

The amazing story of this 76-year-old Egyptian Coptic priest is well worth re-telling, since he has succeeded in reaching millions of Muslims with the Christian Gospel. The secret of his success lies in his method of comparing Islamic teachings with the truth of the Bible. Furthermore, he has made effective use of the Internet to reach out to millions.

Botros's life story is well told in a biography by Stuart Robinson and Peter Botros, *Defying Death: Zakaria Botros – Apostle to Islam*. (See fatherzakaria.com).



Zakaria Botros has reached millions of Muslims with the Gospel of Christ.

Botros's Mission

In an interview with *Frontpage Magazine* on June 5, 2009, Botros explained his mission in life as "the salvation of souls." He elaborated as follows: "As I always say, inasmuch as I may reject Islam, I love Muslims. Thus, to save the latter, I have no choice but to expose the former for the false religion it is. Christ commanded us to spread the Good News ... This is more important considering that many Muslims are 'religious' and truly seek to please God; yet are they misdirected. So I want to take their sincerity and piety and direct it to the True Light."

Asked to summarize why he thinks that Islam is a "false" religion, Botros answered with a directness and honesty that is rarely found in the free West: "Theologically, I am a Christian priest, I believe that only Christianity offers the truth. Based on my faith in Christ, I reject all other religious systems as man-made and thus not reflective of divine truths. Moreover, one of the greatest crimes committed by Muhammad – a crime which he shall surely never be forgiven for is that he denied the grace and mercy that Christ brought, and took humanity back to the age

Zakaria Botros: apostle to the Muslim world

of the law."

Early in his youth, Botros displayed a knack for leadership and study. He began to study for the priesthood, and in early 1959 was ordained as a priest in the Coptic Church. According to custom, at this time he also married and received a new name instead of his birth name, Feyez.

Botros became a powerful preacher and teacher, attracting large crowds, including Muslims who converted to the Christian faith. His work drew the attention of the authorities and he was twice imprisoned, the first time being in 1981 for 318 days in appalling conditions. (Botros's teenage brother was killed for the "crime" of being a Christian). Botros was expelled from Egypt in 1998, then served as pastor of Coptic churches in Australia and England.

Breaking down barriers

While living in England Botros had been invited to preach and teach in the U.S., which led to his move there in 2003. This enabled him to conduct a very effective ministry to the Arabic-speaking world via the internet. Prior to this he participated in the televised PalTalk program, which he used to teach Muslims about the doctrines of Islam versus the truth of the Bible. Also, in 1999 Botros launched his own website and internet chat room where for three hours a week he would interact with visitors and engage in debates with his critics. By 2001 this had grown to four full days per week. Botros divided his presentations into two sections. First, he discussed biblical teachings verse by verse; second, there followed a discussion of comparative religion. Over the years, he developed a comprehensive curriculum dealing with the many contradictions in Islam and in the life and practice of Muhammad.

Not surprisingly, this aroused hatred and vilification by Muslim leaders, all the more so since Botros always remains calm and friendly. What really annoys his critics is that Botros, backed by his thorough mastery of classical Arabic and all the Islamic canonical works, often leaves them looking foolish and unable to respond convincingly.

Botros's audience kept growing, especially after 2003 when his program was broadcast on *Al Hyaf* (Life) TV. Botros estimates that during his ministry in Egypt from 1963 to 1989, about 500 Muslims converted to Christianity while the estimate for today is 1000 per month.

Botros's life and work is above all a sign of God's power to overcome man-made barriers so that the truth of Christ shines even in the darkest corners and calls thousands, even millions, out of the prison of a false religion. *Defying Death* should be in every Christian home, church and school library. You will be encouraged. Indeed, Christ is Lord.

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation.

He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



It puzzled me why a grocery department employee at Wal-Mart was loading every 10 lb. bag of potatoes from the produce aisle onto a cart, so I asked the man what was wrong with them. "They're going to the dumpster because they're going green," he said. "The store doesn't want to take any chances."

Potatoes will go green if they are exposed to sunlight. The green is chlorophyll. It tastes bitter and may cause upset stomach. Folks who eat potatoes know not to eat the green – it's similar to the potato leaves. Peel the skin and cut out the green parts entirely, and you still have perfectly edible potatoes. Imagine the mountain of potatoes that have been thrown out just at Wal-Mart stores across North America just because of the greenish colour.

Throwing out good raw food is bad, but it really gets me when I see good wholesome prepared food left on plates and thrown into the garbage. You see this in the restaurants all the time. Was the food that bad or were they not hungry?

Not wanting to barbecue too many Red Angus beef patties at our small family get-together this summer, I asked our guests what they preferred: hamburger from the grill or chicken breasts from the oven. My nephew's girlfriend said she usually eats only chicken but would have a burger. As she was eating the burger, which was topped with tomatoes and lettuce from our garden, she told us it was one of the best burgers she ever had. I was proud of my barbecuing skills, but then my heart sank when I saw she left half of the burger on her plate. The dog sitting by her feet wasn't offered any, and she would have thrown it into the garbage if my wife hadn't saved it for our barn cats. Our cats eat table scraps and real food, and are the healthiest and happiest cats you'll ever see.

United Nations report

Roughly one third of food produced in the world for human consumption every year – approximately 1.3 billion tonnes – gets lost or wasted, according a Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations study released in May of this year.

The report distinguishes between food loss and food waste. Food losses, which occur at the production, harvest, post-harvest and processing phases, are most prominent in developing countries due to poor infrastructure, low levels of technology and low investment in the food production systems.

Food waste is more of a problem in industrialized countries, and most often consists of both retailers and consumers throwing out perfectly edible foodstuffs into the trash. Fruits and vegetables, plus roots and tubers, have the highest waste

Food waste

age rates of any food. Per capita waste by consumers is between 95–115 kg a year in Europe and North America, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa and south and Southeast Asia each throw away only 6–11 kg a year.

In the developing world, over 40 per cent of food losses occur after harvest during storage, transportation, processing and packing. The amount of food lost or wasted every year is equivalent to more than half of the world's annual cereals crop (2.3 billion tonnes). Food losses and waste also amount to a major squandering of resources, including water, land, energy,



Approximately one third of global food production goes to waste

labour and capital, and needlessly produce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming and climate change.

How to reduce food waste

The UN report offered a number of practical suggestions on how to reduce losses and waste. In developing countries, the problem is chiefly one of inadequate harvest techniques, poor post-harvest management and logistics, lack of suitable infrastructure, processing and packaging and lack of marketing information which would allow production to better match demand.

Consumers in rich countries are generally encouraged to buy more food than they need. "Buy three, pay two" promotions are one example, while the oversized ready-to-eat meals produced by the food industry are another. Restaurants frequently offer fixed-price buffets that spur customers to heap their plates. Generally speaking, the report found that consumers fail to plan their food purchases properly. This means they often throw food away when "best before" dates expire.

At the retail level, large quantities of food are also wasted due to quality standards that over-emphasize appearance. This is why you don't see crooked or oddly shaped carrots, or potatoes that have gone a little green. That's food for thought this Thanksgiving weekend.

Meindert van der Galien keeps a small herd of Red Angus and Charolais cattle on his farm near Renfrew in eastern Ontario.

News

Did Berkeley's 'racist' bake sale go too far?

Daniel B. Wood

Los Angeles (CSM) – The bake sale was supposed to be a satire, bringing attention to what organizers feel is a discriminating and racist bill, now on the desk of California Gov. Jerry Brown, that would allow the state's university systems to consider race, ethnicity, and gender in admission decisions.

By the measure of media exposure, the Berkeley College Republicans' event was an unqualified success, making headlines across the country for the peculiar pricing system on its baked goods: \$2 for whites, \$1.50 for Asians, \$1 for Latinos, and so on.

By the measure of satire, many thought a stunt that organizers acknowledged was "inherently racist" went too far, with the Berkeley student association condemning the methodology and school administrators endorsing that position.

By the measure of Berkeley itself, however, it was in many ways business as usual. As the home of the free-speech movement, Berkeley is nothing if not opinionated.

Two hours after the bake sale opened Tuesday, a counterprotest was already in full swing, with black-clad students lying down in the main campus quadrangle. Other groups distributed pink "conscious cupcakes" as a why-can't-we-all-just-hold-hands alternative.

Earlier this month, when Berkeley's "protest season" began, students angered by tuition hikes occupied a campus building, with several protesters throwing rocks, bottles, and chairs at police officers. In March, the same topic led six protesters to chain themselves together and stand on a fourth-story ledge.

"This has created the dialogue we wanted," Shawn Lewis, president of the Berkeley College Republicans said. "Berkeley is the home of the free-speech movement. We want to be sure it doesn't become the capital of political correctness."

But some analysts say the message of the event may have been lost amid the confusion and anger that accompanied it.

The bake sale was taking aim at Senate Bill 185, which would allow the universities in the California and California State systems to consider race, gender, ethnicity, and national origin in admissions, so long as those factors do not become a determining factor. SB 185 seeks to mitigate Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action in state institutions in 1996. Proponents of SB 185 say it does not run afoul of Prop. 209 because it says race can be considered only as one criteria among many.

This reading of the law should pass legal muster, says William Tierney, director of the Center for Higher



The pricing scheme at Berkeley's "racist bake sale."

Education Policy Analysis at the University of Southern California, which is not part of the state university system.

"Simply because the law says that race, gender, and nationality can be taken into account doesn't suddenly mean that whites or Asian Americans are suddenly in danger of being discriminated against," he says.

The Berkeley College Republicans disagree, so when the Berkeley's student association set up a phone bank to encourage students to call Governor Brown and lobby for SB 185, they took a page from the playbook of college Republicans nationwide. Indeed, the Berkeley College Republicans didn't invent the idea of a "diversity bake sale." The Wall Street Journal cites one at the University of California at Los Angeles as far back as 2003.

But combine the rise of social media with Berkeley's leftward tilt, and the result was a media explosion.

At Berkeley, Chancellor Robert Birgenau released a statement saying the strong reactions to the bake sale provided "a vivid lesson that issues of race, ethnicity and gender are far from resolved."

To some, the bake sale represented a backward view. The satire "is rooted in the historical and racial contract fabric of white supremacy and the decline of whiteness in a continuous browning society,"

says Chad Dion Lassiter, president of Black Men at Penn at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice.

To others, it directed a spotlight toward an issue that needs discussion.

Daniel B. Wood is a staff writer for the Christian Science Monitor.

UFCW lies against CLAC slammed by Advertising Council

Fort McMurray, AB (CLAC) – A complaint by CLAC about a scurrilous billboard ad in Fort McMurray paid for by UFCW Local 401 was unanimously upheld by the Consumer Response Council of Advertising Standards Canada. The council ruled that the ad "demeaned, denigrated and disparaged" CLAC and ordered that it be removed immediately. CLAC filed a complaint against the ad saying it violated the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards. The council said the ad, which claimed CLAC is not a "real union," conveyed a message that unfairly discredits and disparages the services of CLAC and exaggerates the nature of competitive differences between CLAC and other comparable unions. The council includes representatives from advertisers, advertising agencies, the media, and the public. "The council's clear-cut decision vindicates CLAC's position that attacks on our reputation by some other unions are flat out lies that far exceed what is acceptable or legal," says Dick Heinen, CLAC's executive director. "CLAC will continue to defend itself vigorously and hold to account those who cross the line."

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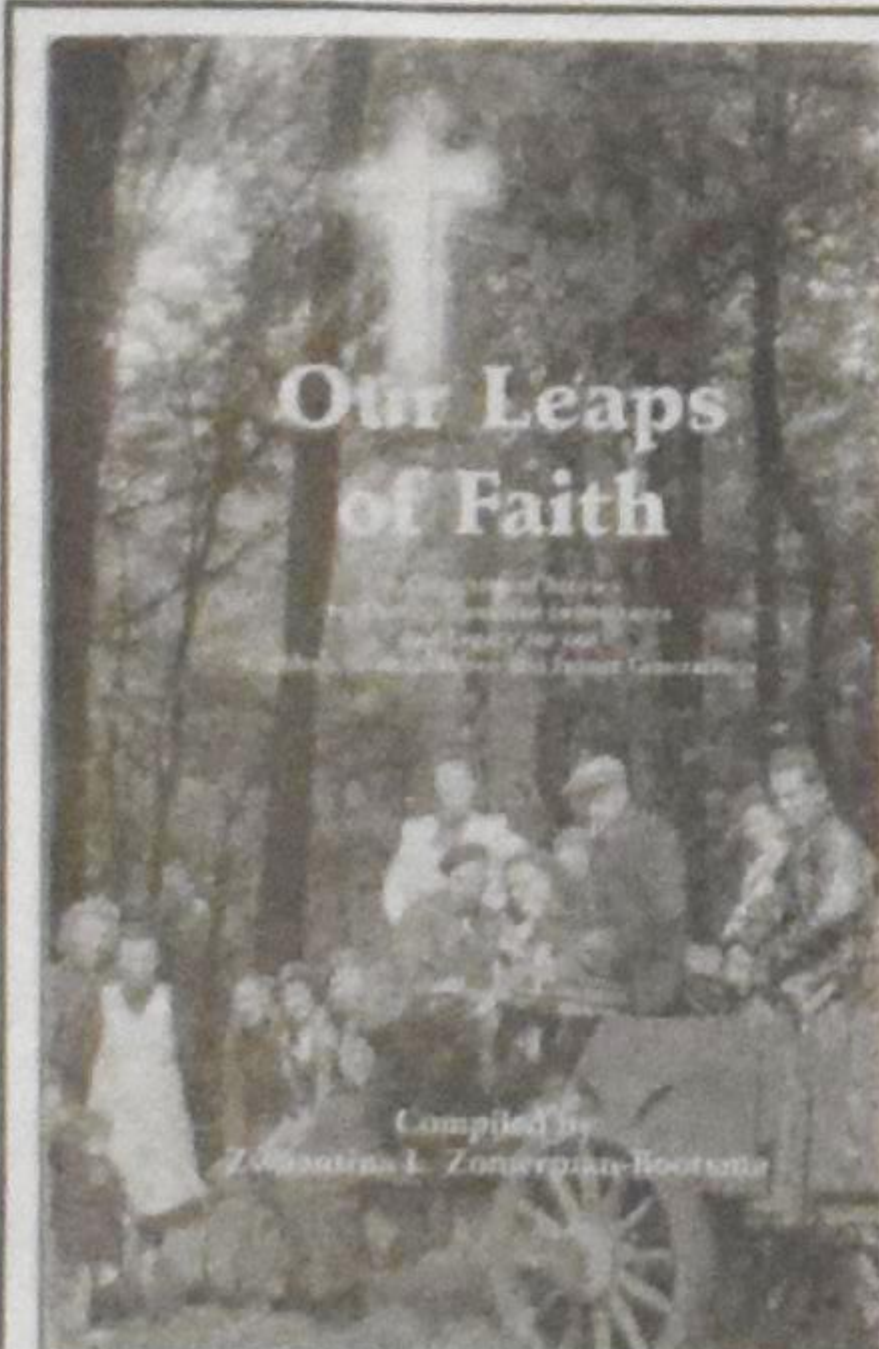
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Classifieds

Birthday	Anniversary	Obituaries
<p>With joy and thanksgiving to our Lord for his enduring faithfulness and blessing, we hope to celebrate DV the</p> <p>90th Birthday of</p>  <p>Audrey Bouma On October 16th, 2011</p> <p>With much love from your family Elaine & Leo Smit, <i>Barrie ON</i> Tony & Ann Bouma, <i>Calgary AB</i> Okke Bouma (deceased) Arie & Grace Bouma, <i>Hamilton ON</i></p> <p>This special event will be celebrated with a family reunion of her children, 12 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren in Hamilton, Ontario.</p> <p>Home address: 216 - 337 Stone Church Road East Hamilton ON L9B 1B1</p>	 <p>As children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren we would like to extend our love and congratulations to</p> <p>ZWIER AND ANNE ADRIAANSE (nee Van Helden) on their 65th Wedding Anniversary. Ryswyk, 1946 October 9 Brampton, 2011</p> <p>We are thankful to the Lord for giving us such wonderful parents and grandparents. We pray that he will continue to bless and keep them for each other and for us.</p> <p>Oscar & Joanne Feenstra, <i>Acton ON</i> Rick & Christine Feenstra - Alex Anne, Lucas, <i>Guelph ON</i> Jason & Michelle Feenstra - April, Ethan, <i>Rockwood ON</i> Shane Feenstra, <i>Acton ON</i> John & Cathy Adriaanse, <i>Barrie ON</i> Valerie Adriaanse, <i>Toronto ON</i> Darryl Adriaanse, <i>Barrie ON</i> Christopher Adriaanse, <i>Toronto ON</i> Piet Adriaanse, <i>Brampton ON</i></p> <p>Correspondence may be addressed to Z. Adriaanse HT 512 - 7900 McLaughlin Rd S, Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p>	<p>GRACE VANDER DEEN (nee Feddema) Born August 15, 1932, Schuinesloot, the Netherlands</p> <p>On Wednesday August 24, 2011 at home, surrounded by her family, the Lord called to Himself our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother in her 80th year. She lived joyfully in the faith, putting her sure hope for salvation in Jesus Christ our Saviour.</p> <p>Dear wife of Ipe Vander Deen for 57 years.</p> <p>Loving mother of: Richard & Barb Vander Deen, <i>Strathroy ON</i> Patricia & Rudy Heidelberg, <i>St. Albert AB</i> Clarence & Irene Vander Deen, <i>Strathroy ON</i> Ivan & Diana Vander Deen, <i>Langton ON</i> Sharon & Steve Talsma, <i>Norwich ON</i> Irene & Charlie Dykxhoorn, <i>Springfield ON</i> John & Teresa Vander Deen, <i>Aylmer ON</i> Oma to 33 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>The funeral took place August 29, 2011 in Providence United Reformed Church in Strathroy. Psalm 16:5,6; <i>Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.</i> <i>The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely, I have a delightful inheritance.</i></p> <p>Correspondence: 6 Ross Court, Strathroy ON N7G 3W6</p> <p><i>I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.</i> <i>Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!</i> Psalm 27:13-14</p> <p>Sexbierum, Friesland - May 24, 1922 Wingham, Ontario - September 12, 2011</p> <p>EDITH (Ietsie) Klaver DE JONG</p> <p>Entered peacefully into the presence of our Lord and Saviour on Monday in Wingham District Hospital, Wingham, Ont. in her 90th year.</p> <p>Predeceased by her brother Frank in 1953 and grandchildren Harry Eric in 1976, Shane Elliott in 1976 and Ruth Ann in 1978.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Harry DeJong for 64 years.</p> <p>Dear mother of: Dirk & Cora DeJong Tess & Mike Tigchelaar Rita & Ray Berg Louis & Faye DeJong Frank & Hilda DeJong.</p> <p>Beloved Beppe of Rachel, Michael (Jennifer), Harry (Lori), Faye (Derek), Daniel (Karina), Emily (Marius), David (Erin), Shawn (Tanya), Kara, Carrie, Laura, Brandon, Aaron (Melody), Jan, Hadassah, Eden, Abigail, Frank, John (Jen), Danielle and Hailey. Great-Beppe to 14 great-grandchildren. Edith will be remembered by many nieces and nephews in Canada, The Netherlands and USA and leaves behind 3 sisters and 1 brother in The Netherlands.</p> <p>A Memorial Service was held on Thursday, September 15 at 2:00 p.m. at the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church. A private family burial was held before the service at Riverside Cemetery in Wellandport. Edith was a founding member of the CRC in Kitchener and Wellandport. Rev. William Veenstra officiating.</p> <p>Correspondence: Harry L. DeJong, 43692 Gough Rd RR 2, Gorrie ON N0G 1X0</p> 



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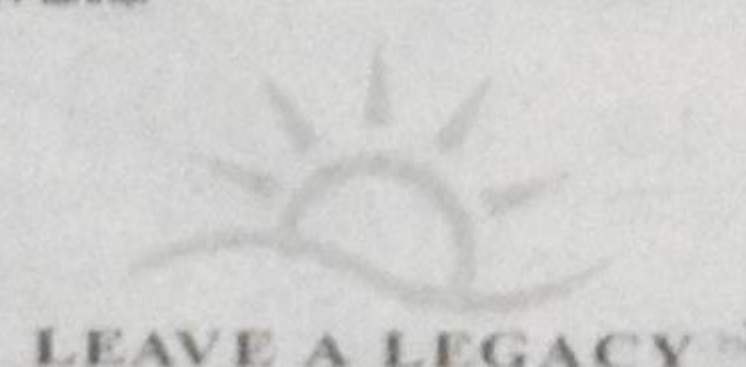


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Note: All job ads run in *Christian Courier* are also posted on our website at christiancourier.ca



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First CRC, Thunder Bay, ON is seeking a full time pastor

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Applications are due by Monday, October 24, 2011.



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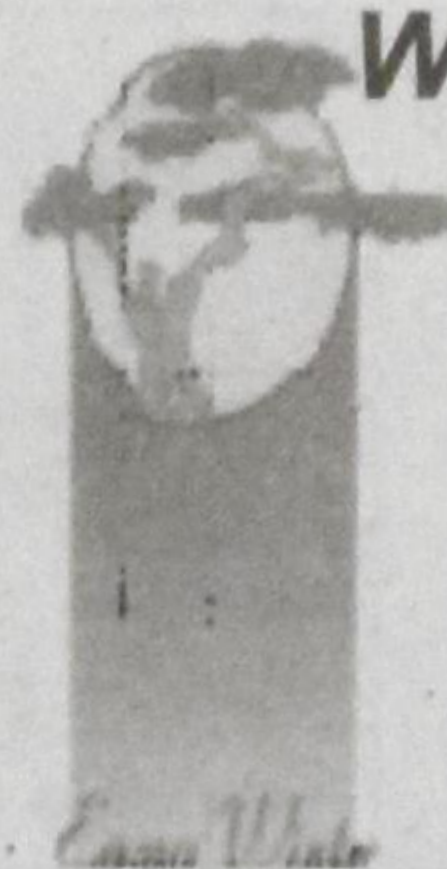
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct 15 Day of Encouragement. Hamilton District Christian High School, **Ancaster** For information, call: 905-336-0967 ext. 278 Information will soon be on our website: diaconalministries.com

Oct 19 & 22 Leendert Kooij and the Ontario Christian Music Assembly (OCMA) will host a Benefit Concert on Oct 19, 7:30 pm at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church, **Whitby** and Oct 22 7:30 pm at the St George's Anglican Church, **Guelph**.

Nov 4 Christian Festival Concert. 7:30 pm. Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, See ad.

Nov 10 Annual Church & Charity Law Seminar. Hosted by Carters Professional Corporation in **Toronto**, Ontario. Details and online registration available at <http://charitylaw.ca>.

Nov 13 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching. DVDs available.

Nov 18 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah 8 pm Christ Church Anglican, 4 Elizabeth Street North, **Brampton** \$30, Students \$10

Nov 20 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah 8 pm St. James Anglican Church, **Caledon East**

Nov 20 CRC of **Stratford**, Ontario 60 year celebration. More information to come or at stratfordcrc.org

Dec 2 & 3 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah at 8 pm Old Town Hall, Willow and Bower Streets, **Acton**.

Dec 4 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah at 2:30 pm St. Elias Ukrainian Church, 10193 Heritage Rd, **Brampton**

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The 18th Annual Church & Charity Law™ Seminar

Greater Toronto Area -
Thursday, November 10, 2011

The 18th Annual Church & Charity Law™ Seminar, held annually since 1994, is designed to assist churches and charities in understanding developing trends in the law in order to reduce unnecessary exposure to legal liability. The seminar will have a number of expert guest speakers, including Cathy Hawara, Director General of the Charities Directorate of Canada Revenue Agency.

ONLY \$25 + HST / Person IF YOU REGISTER BY OCTOBER 31, 2011
\$30 + HST / person after October 31st. DETAILS AND ONLINE REGISTRATION at <http://www.carters.ca/pub/seminar/chrchlaw/2011/>

The seminar is to be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with complimentary coffee, tea and muffins served at 7:45 am, in the Greater Toronto Area at the Portico Community Church, located at 1814 Barbertown Road, in Mississauga, Ontario.

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News

Thanksgiving on a turkey farm

Annie Oegema

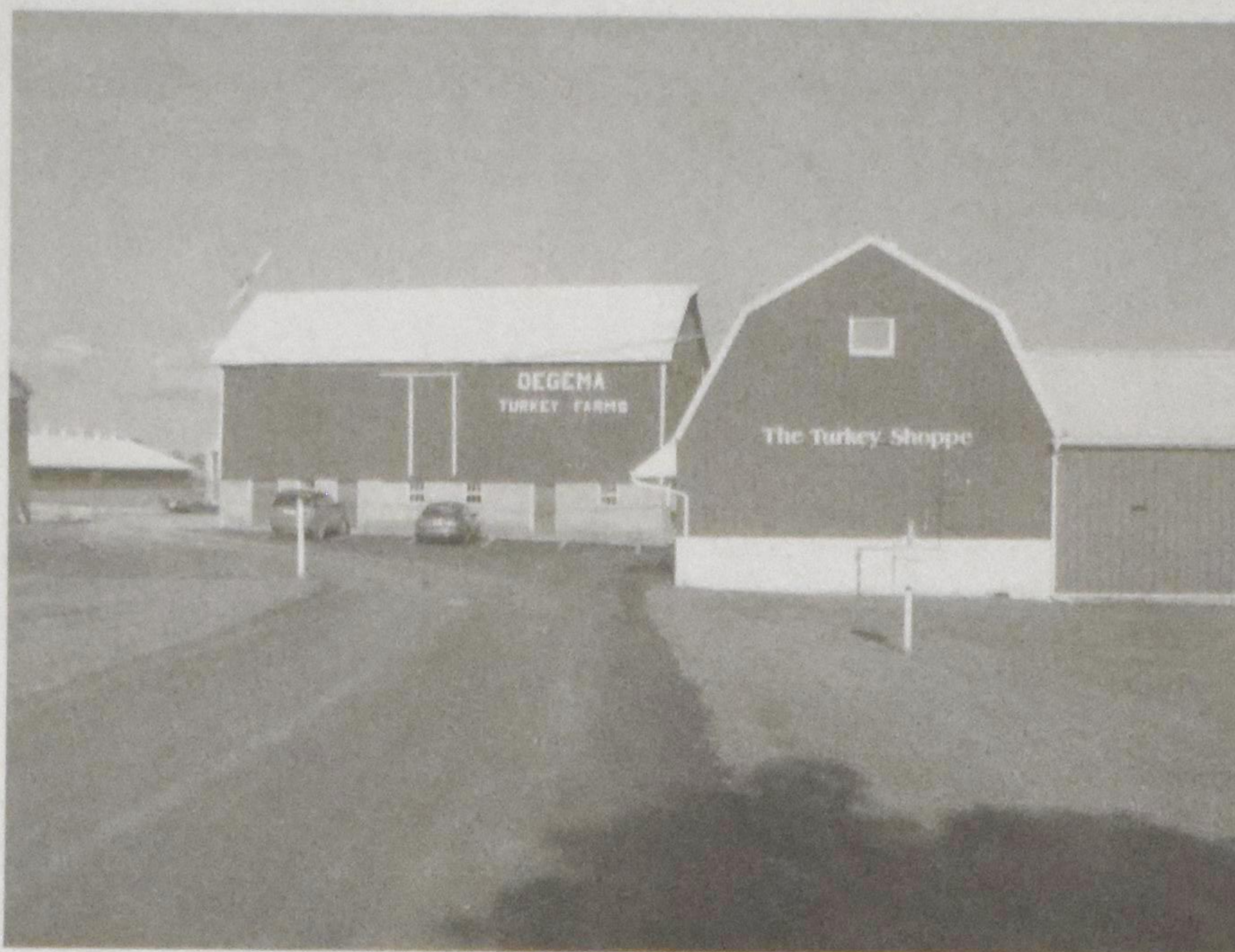
ST. THOMAS, Ontario – Welcome to Oegema Turkey Farms, a third generation family farm, and The Turkey Shoppe, our on-farm retail store. Our farm is a busy place around Thanksgiving and we would like to share a “behind the scenes look” at what goes on to deliver the perfect turkey to your Thanksgiving table.

Most people start planning their Thanksgiving dinner approximately one to two weeks before the holiday. When you’re a turkey farmer with an on-farm retail store, however, the first step takes place a full year in advance when the flock schedule is set for the upcoming year. It takes approximately 14 weeks to grow that perfect 15 lb fresh turkey, so making sure our poults (one day old turkeys) are going to arrive during a specific week is crucial.

This year, our heavy hen and tom poults (15–18 lbs. and 25–28 lbs.) arrived on June 23rd. The light hen and tom poults (12–15 lbs. and 20–24 lbs.) arrived on July 5. They stayed in the “brooder barn” for five weeks before being moved into the “grow out barns.”

It starts to feel like Thanksgiving in *The Turkey Shoppe* shortly after Labour Day. We need to build our inventory of turkey pies, soup, sausage, burgers, roasts, schnitzel, ground turkey and the many other products we produce in anticipation of the influx of customers. Advertising is arranged, the online ordering is activated, extra stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce, etc., is ordered. We even start taking orders for fresh turkeys and roasts.

Things really start to get interesting during the two weeks before the holiday. We take orders for approximately 1100 fresh turkeys and



Oegema Turkey Farms and The Turkey Shoppe.

200 roasts and 90 percent of them are placed within these two weeks. About 20 percent of our customers order online, but that is still a lot of phone calls! Some mornings someone can just stay by the phone taking orders. Each of these orders is written in the order book, and then entered into our computer distribution program.

The week of the Thanksgiving weekend, we switch our focus from preparing for the holiday to delivering for the holiday. The live turkeys have been shipped to the processor and we have a refrigerated transport trailer on the yard full of fresh turkeys, breast meat, thigh meat, wings and drums that will be used to fill our holiday retail and wholesale orders. Over the course of the week, each turkey is weighed and placed in the cooler according to weight. The all-white, white/dark and all-dark roasts are made. The number of turkeys and roasts in each weight category are entered into the distribution program, and customers start trickling in to

pick up their fresh turkey or roast. Understandably, the Friday and the Saturday are the biggest days. Our store usually employs two to four people each day, but swells to 13 employees during this time. All the full and part-time staff are present and we recruit our kids, our parents and few others besides.

The first people customers meet when picking up an order are the parking attendants. When you have 15 regular parking spots and hundreds of cars coming through in a day, having parking staff to keep it organized is a must. During the peak Saturday morning rush, the yard behind the storage barn is converted to a parking lot. Upon entering the store, people who have already placed an order will be directed to a computer where someone takes their information and calls up their order. The order is then sent to the cooler, picked up, delivered to the tills, paid for and our customer is on their way. If the customer has not previously ordered a turkey, one of the floor staff will help them pick out one of the 200 or so fresh turkeys we sell off the shelf.

It's an incredibly busy week and we are very tired at the end of it all, but we consider it a blessing to be part of so many Thanksgiving dinners.

Annie Oegema is the retail manager of The Turkey Shoppe, the on-farm retail store at Oegema Turkey Farms. The farm is run by her husband Mike and brother-in-law Wayne, and has been in the Oegema family for three generations.



One of these turkeys may have ended up in your Thanksgiving dinner

Odds and Trends

Self-control pays off

During the 1960s the psychologist Walter Mischel devised an interesting experiment to gauge whether or not self-control really matters. Mischel gave a group of four-year olds a simple choice: to be given one marshmallow immediately or two marshmallows in 15 minutes. Two decades later, Mischel followed up with his subjects and found that children who chose to wait 15 minutes in order to get two marshmallows went on to achieve higher levels of education, earn more money, have more successful relationships, deal better with stress, have higher self-esteem, and be less likely to take drugs.

But self-control has become a neglected virtue in our time and the more we give in to our temptations the harder it becomes to resist them, at least according to a new book by psychologist Roy Baumeister and science writer John Tierney. In *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*, Baumeister and Tierney argue (based on Baumeister's extensive clinical experiments) that self-control works like a muscle: in order to be strong and healthy it needs to be exercised. If you need help choosing broccoli over chocolate or getting work done rather than watching YouTube, Baumeister and Tierney suggest practicing self-control by establishing little routines in your life such as recording what you eat, exercising regularly, speaking only in complete sentences, or operating the mouse on your computer with your weaker hand.

In defence of dogs

Were you aware that your dog needs defending? This is what John Bradshaw argues in *In Defence of Dogs*, suggesting that human misunderstandings of canine science have caused us to make lots of mistakes when relating to our animal best friends. The first of these is to assume that dogs are aggressive and need to be shown who's boss. Apparently new research into the social dynamics of wolf packs – a species with many canine similarities – has shown that rather than being ruled by a single “alpha wolf,” these packs function as harmonious and cooperative family units. And so it is, Bradshaw argues, with dogs: they'd rather be your friend than your subordinate.

The biggest area of human-canine misunderstanding is the widespread belief among dog owners that Fido is capable of complex emotion, especially guilt over doggy misdeeds. Many dog owners look into their pooch's eyes after an episode of misbehaviour and believe they see contrition. Not so, argues Bradshaw, who cites research confirming that dogs aren't capable of the complex self-understandings that we often attribute them. So when your dog tears up the living room while you're away, it has no idea why it's being punished when you get home. This is a shame, because the one emotion dogs are thoroughly capable of is love. Bradshaw concludes that our dogs probably love us even more than we think, to the point that approximately 20 percent of them experience significant separation anxiety when we're not around.

Which font do you use?

Most computer users have easy access to more than 100,000 different typefaces. Why so many? Because the appearance of a font has a significant effect on the way we feel about the words we read, at least according to Simon Garfield's new book *Just My Type*. For instance, Helvetica conveys “impartiality, neutrality and freshness,” while modern typefaces such as Bodoni “say CLASS.” *Christian Courier* uses Times New Roman, which is more “honest and carved” than many sans serif fonts and has a “traditional, neutral, unshowy feel.” The perfect fit for a Calvinist magazine.

Michael Buma